



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 1999

REINSPECTION JUNE 2000

Haydon Training Services Ltd

SUMMARY

Haydon Training Services Ltd delivers foundation training programmes to young people, many of whom have additional learning support needs, and occupational training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3. Staff have a good understanding of trainees' needs and trainees on all programmes are enabled to progress within a supportive environment. Trainees acquire occupational skills in carefully selected work placements. In health, care and public services, training is good, with high levels of retention and achievement. Training in retailing and customer service and foundation for work is satisfactory. However, although trainees' progress is monitored effectively, clear identification of individual targets is not always made and insufficient use is made of initial assessment in the development of individual training plans. Previously, there was no formal central system for quality assurance. Considerable improvements in quality assurance have been made since the first inspection. A central system for quality assurance with written operational procedures has been introduced. Equal opportunities data are analysed and used to target marketing successfully. Effective internal verification procedures have been maintained. Self-assessment is systematic and contributes to continuous improvement.

As a result of the reinspection of Haydon Training Services Ltd, the original published report text for quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. The 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
Retailing & customer service	3
Health, care & public services	2
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good progress by trainees
- ◆ supportive work placements
- ◆ effective monitoring of trainees
- ◆ good arrangements for trainee support
- ◆ effective implementation of equal opportunities
- ◆ good management of on-the-job training
- ◆ effective procedures for internal verification



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor identification of individual goals and targets
- ◆ insufficient training materials
- ◆ inadequate use of initial assessment
- ◆ poorly written management procedures

INTRODUCTION

1. Haydon Training Services Ltd (HTS) is a privately owned company formed in 1992, and is located in the centre of Aylesbury. It manages and provides work-based training programmes for young people in the occupational areas of business administration, retailing and customer service, care and foundation for work. Since the first inspection, the company has upgraded its accommodation by relocating to larger premises which affords sufficient training rooms and management offices to meet the demands of the company, which has undergone considerable expansion during the last year. At the time of the first inspection, the company employed nine members of staff. The company now has a staff of 21, of whom 14 are employed full time. Previously, 106 young people, many with additional learning support needs, were in training. Now, the number of people in training has increased and occupational training has been extended to include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. At the time of reinspection, 163 young people were in training, 50 per cent of whom are endorsed as having additional learning needs. Foundation training programmes have been revised and greater emphasis is placed upon the provision of 'work tasters'. Since September 1999, the company has been running life-skills courses for disaffected 16 to 17 year olds as part of the government's *Learning Gateway* initiative. Most trainees enter training programmes through referrals from the careers service.

2. Training programmes are funded through contracts with the local training and enterprise council (TEC), Thames Valley Enterprise, which provides the main source of the company's income. Customised information technology training programmes are delivered on a commercial basis. The company has recently upgraded its information technology facilities in line with company policy to expand key skills training and develop modern apprenticeships. The company runs a town-centre retail outlet which provides income and a work placement for trainees following retailing programmes. All off-the-job training is given at the new premises. All trainees on mainstream vocational programmes have work placements. During the first inspection, business administration training was not inspected owing to the low number of trainees.

3. HTS draws most of its trainees from the southwest Buckinghamshire district authorities of Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe. Within these authorities lie the two main towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe. Much of the region is covered by green belt and designated areas of outstanding beauty. However, a dearth of permanent affordable housing for young people and the lack of accessible transport are major issues in the county. Aylesbury is a market town with a population which has more than doubled since the 1950s to its present 155,000. Formerly a printing centre, Aylesbury is now concerned with service industries and light engineering. The Wycombe district is an area of considerable contrast with the urban environment of High Wycombe and the smaller rural towns of Marlow and Princes Risborough. The total population of the Wycombe district was estimated to be 164,000 in 1995, of which 80 per cent lived in or around High

Wycombe. There is a wide range of minority ethnic groups in Buckinghamshire. The Buckinghamshire Local Population Survey of 1996 showed a minority ethnic population of 4 per cent in Aylesbury town and 8 per cent in the Aylesbury Vale district. Minority ethnic groups make up 18.3 per cent of the population of High Wycombe and 8.3 per cent of the population of Wycombe district. Local firms, especially in manufacturing and high technology, are experiencing skills shortages with nearly a thousand job-centre vacancies presently available in the travel-to-work area of Aylesbury and High Wycombe. Unemployment in the Southeast region of England is low at 2.2 per cent and lower than the national level of unemployment of 3.9 per cent. In April 2000, unemployment in Aylesbury and High Wycombe stood at 1.4 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 61 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 1998, it was 59.5 per cent compared with the then national average of 46.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. HTS's first self-assessment report was prepared in December 1998. The company prepared well for self-assessment and managers attended training sessions organised by the TEC. Staff's awareness and understanding of the process were raised through meetings with external consultants, and brainstorming sessions for all staff were held to establish good and poor practice within each aspect of provision. The self-assessment report was well presented and detailed, and clearly identified strengths and weaknesses. Action plans for effecting continuous improvements were included within the report. The process of self-assessment had been used effectively to identify areas of weakness and some action plans for improvements had been implemented prior to inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grades the company cited for its occupational areas and for equal opportunities and support for trainees. Inspectors judged that the company had understated its strengths for management of training, but over-valued its provision for quality assurance.

5. The company's second self-assessment report was completed in May 2000. All staff were involved in its compilation and its findings used evidence generated through self-assessment. Self-assessment is now a continuous process which is integrated into quality assurance. Implementation of action plans resulting from findings of the first inspection has been monitored and used to evaluate the quality of its provision. Self-assessment reports for the occupational areas are descriptive as well as evaluative, and clearly identify changes which have taken place since the first inspection. Generic sections are less descriptive. Judgements within the report are supported by identified sources of evidence. Actions to consolidate strengths and address weaknesses, together with staff's responsibilities, are incorporated within all occupational and generic sections of the report. A separate self-assessment document for quality assurance, supplementary to the main self-assessment report, was prepared for reinspection. The document is detailed and provides a clear descriptive narrative of changes in procedures for quality assurance

6. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 12 days at HTS during the first inspection in March 1999. Inspection covered government-funded youth training programmes in the occupational areas of retailing and customer service, health, care and public services and foundation for work. Inspectors made 14 visits to work placements and interviewed 42 trainees. Meetings were held with HTS's managers and trainers/assessors, as well as employers and work-placement providers. A wide range of documents was viewed, including management and quality assurance documents, policies, minutes of meetings, TEC contracts, external audits and staff appraisal and development documents. Trainees' files, training plans and work portfolios were examined. Data for trainees' recruitment, achievement and progression were scrutinised. Inspection of learning resources and accommodation for on- and off-the-job training was carried out. Five training and assessment sessions at the centre were observed, and the grades awarded to

these are shown in the table at the end of this section.

7. The company was reinspected in June 2000 by two inspectors over a total of four days. Inspectors made two visits to work placements to interview employers. Inspectors spoke with six trainees and visited one off-the-job training session. Meetings were held with members of the company's senior management team and trainers/assessors. Documents inspected included TEC contracts, the company's business plan, quality assurance manual, trainees' portfolios and review records, achievement data, external and internal audit reports, internal verification records and external verifier's reports, employers and trainees' feedback questionnaire evaluations and minutes of meetings.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions during the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Retailing & customer service			2			2
Health, care & public services			1			1
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total	0	1	4	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

8. There are 47 trainees working towards distributive operations at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1. Four trainees are working towards a retailing NVQ at level 2. The number of trainees has increased recently by 38 per cent. All present trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. These trainees have progressed to occupational training from the prevocational Starting Line programmes. Non-endorsed trainees are also recruited. Trainees have the opportunity to experience 'taster' placements to assess their suitability for retail programmes. Where appropriate, trainees receive basic skills training at the centre and many work towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. The company's retail outlet in the centre of Aylesbury is used as a sheltered work placement for trainees. All training and assessment takes place on the job. All trainees are placed in retail outlets and warehouses; 14 trainees are permanently employed. The self-assessment report failed to record all strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors, however, awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements including a designated retail training outlet
- ◆ good progress by trainees towards occupational competence
- ◆ staff support trainees' progress through effective and regular contact
- ◆ good trainee progression rates to employment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient training materials
- ◆ inadequate provision for occupational off-the-job training
- ◆ individual training plans lack detail
- ◆ inadequate target-setting and recording

9. The company has developed a wide range of well-managed retail and distributive operations placements. Trainees receive effective occupational training with employers who are carefully selected and matched to the needs of individual trainees. Employers are supportive of the training process and impart knowledge and skills to enable trainees to acquire occupational skills and develop workplace competence. Some work completed by trainees is of good quality and trainees demonstrate good understanding of their occupational skills and practical knowledge. The company makes good use of its town-centre retail outlet. This facility enables particularly vulnerable trainees to be placed in a working environment which provides high levels of supervision and support. Generally, trainees make good progress towards the achievement of occupational competence and improved employability. Individual training plans are completed efficiently to meet TEC contract requirements. However, procedures for planning and developing individual training plans are weak. Documented training plans lack detail and clear identification of schedules for training in work placements. Little routine analysis is made of job specification at work and its mapping to NVQ requirements. Trainees' progress review documents indicate a lack of routine setting and recording of targets for trainees' achievements with clearly identified goals and timescales. Each trainee is given copies of review documents, but these lack clear summary records of progress and do not give full guidance to trainees.

10. Trainees' assessments are carried out in the workplace and arrangements are satisfactory. Assessments are planned with trainees' involvement, and trainees have a good awareness of the NVQ process. Employers support the development of trainees' confidence and provide good levels of guidance and coaching. Haydon Training's staff make frequent visits to trainees in work placements and staff respond promptly to trainees' needs. Where appropriate, additional visits are made and increased support time given to fully meet trainees' needs. Staff respond effectively to personal needs and help trainees with issues other than those relating to their vocational training. In many cases, however, the learning materials used to support training are inadequate. Occupational training is conducted entirely at the work placements and some effective use is made of Haydon Training's learning materials.

11. Occupational off-the-job training does not adequately support trainees in their work placements. Centre-based training is focused on the acquisition of basic skills. Wordpower and numberpower programmes are used to delivery literacy and numeracy training. Sessions are only weakly linked to trainees' workplace experiences and requirements. This weakness has been recognised by the company and staff are developing programmes to be more occupationally focused. Trainees' achievement is satisfactory, given the high level of those with special training needs. During the year 1997-98, of 36 leavers 56.9 per cent achieved a qualification. Eight trainees achieved NVQ distributive operations level 1, two trainees achieved NVQ retail level 2 and a further seven trainees gained wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Of 35 leavers during 1998-99, 17 progressed to employment and 49.1 per cent of leavers achieved a whole or part NVQ. Twelve trainees achieved NVQ distributive operations level 1 and three achieved NVQ retail level 2. Present trainees are making good progress towards achievement of NVQ units.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

12. HTS has 19 trainees following work-based training programmes leading to the practical caring skills award. At present, all trainees are endorsed through the careers service as having special training needs. All trainees are placed with local employers in statutory, voluntary or private organisations in a wide range of schools, nurseries, residential homes and providers for people with disabilities. About 50 per cent of trainees are employed permanently. Designated work-based supervisors are assigned to each trainee to provide support. Off-the-job training is delivered in the workplace for half a day each week. The vocational award programme is sub-NVQ level and does not require work-based assessment and internal verification. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements made in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality assignments produced by trainees
- ◆ good training and development documentation
- ◆ good tracking system
- ◆ trainees developing skills and confidence
- ◆ wide range of supportive work placements
- ◆ good retention and achievement
- ◆ work-based supervisors fully involved in trainees' reviews

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor written feedback for trainees' assignment work
- ◆ some training does not fully meet individual needs
- ◆ limited opportunities for trainees to progress
- ◆ unsatisfactory classrooms for off-the-job training

13. Provision of work placements suited to the needs of individual trainees is good. The company has established close working relationships with employers and has developed a wide range of supportive placements for on-the-job training. Workplace supervisors are fully involved in the training process and contribute positively to trainees' occupational and personal development. They have good understanding and awareness of the syllabus for training and are fully informed of trainees' progress by Haydon Training's staff. Arrangements for review of trainees' progress are effective. Supervisors complete skill/task development sheets regularly to feed into the bi-monthly review meetings. Trainees and workplace supervisors are fully involved in the review process. Review forms are signed by the trainee, placement supervisor and HTS' staff. Training schedules are well planned and staff have developed an effective arrangement for tracking trainees' progress. The dates for assignment planning and completion are identified and agreed, and clear records of unit achievement are routinely updated. Clear target dates for achievement of awards are identified and recorded within training plans. Training documentation shows a high level of planning. The content of the syllabus has been used to develop a scheme of weekly work sessions. Detailed lesson plans are used which clearly indicate learning objectives and resources required for each session.

14. Trainees are well supported in their aims to acquire occupational skills and gain in personal confidence. Generally, workplace supervisors create opportunities for trainees to complete mandatory assignments during their daily work routines. However, availability of materials to support learning in the workplace is variable and, in some cases, work-based training does not fully meet the individual needs of trainees. The quality of trainees' written work is good. Assignment work is well presented and contains a good range of material indicating trainees' understanding and knowledge. Written feedback given to trainees on their assignments, however, is poor. Trainees are not given clear and detailed written appraisals of their work, which would give them future reference sources for guidance and support or have written evidence of achievement to celebrate with colleagues. Trainees' achievements have been good over the last three years. During this period 70 per cent of starters have achieved the award and moved into employment. There is, however, no route for trainees to progress beyond the practical caring skills course to NVQ level 2 and above. At present, the company does not employ a vocationally experienced and qualified member of staff to assess and train at level 2. Rooms used for off-the-job training at the centre are not ideal. Training sessions are subject to intrusion of noise from adjacent rooms and offices. The need to use teaching rooms as thoroughfares distracts trainees in session.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

15. Foundation for work training is based on two prevocational programmes, Starting Line Induction and Starting Line Main. All present trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. There are currently 17 trainees on the five-week induction programme. This programme introduces trainees to the world of work and includes in-depth assessment, basic skills training and opportunities for work tasters. Trainees may progress onto the 21-week main Starting Line programme or move directly into work-based occupational training leading to NVQs. Some trainees are recruited directly onto the main Starting Line programme during which they may be placed with several employers to determine their preferences and suitability for work. There are currently 19 trainees on the main programme. If appropriate, trainees on the main Starting Line programme may transfer at any time to mainstream occupational training. Wordpower and numberpower programmes are used as the basis for literacy and numeracy skills training. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good arrangements for assessing trainees' needs
- ◆ staff support enables trainees to learn and progress
- ◆ creative use of learning opportunities
- ◆ carefully selected work placements
- ◆ close working relationships with employers
- ◆ good opportunities for progression to vocational training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ not all trainees attend an in-house induction or initial assessment
- ◆ insufficient training resources
- ◆ basic skills programmes lack vocational emphasis
- ◆ trainees' goals and targets not agreed on or recorded
- ◆ unsatisfactory training rooms
- ◆ no off-the-job training support in the Starting Line main programme

GOOD PRACTICE

Systems which enable trainees to monitor their own progress are good. Trainees' achievements are recorded routinely on a wall chart and this clearly identifies successes and indicates tasks still to be completed. The chart gives public recognition to achievement and acts as a motivator for further achievement.

16. The Starting Line induction programme is carefully planned and well structured to enable trainees to engage in a variety of activities. Sessions are well planned and creative use is made of meaningful examples to engage and sustain the interest of trainees. Arrangements are effective for assessing the learning and support requirements of individual trainees. Use is made of the Basic Skills Agency initial assessment tests for literacy and numeracy. However, in a small

number of cases, trainees have not had an induction or been initially assessed. Good working relationships have been established between trainers and trainees. Trainers effectively support trainees' development and encourage them to achieve their full potential. Discussion with trainees is used well to identify vocational interest and arrange suitable placements with employers for work tasters. The company has developed an extensive resource of supportive work placements. Many trainees sample several workplaces to assess their suitability for work. Weekly telephone contact with employers is made in addition to scheduled monthly visits to workplaces to review trainees' progress and identify and remedy any problems. The company has established clear routes for trainees to progress through its programme structure to vocational training. Trainees receive good support when transferring from Starting Line programmes to vocational training through the use of career review sessions.

17. Generally, resources to support training are inadequate. Learning materials do not fully support the diverse needs of trainees and the handouts used are unattractive and do not encourage interest. Arrangements for basic skills training through wordpower and numberpower programmes lack vocational emphasis. Assessment for literacy and numeracy skills is based on a series of generic worksheets and simulations. Insufficient use is made of evidence of trainees' competency in the workplace. Individual goals and measurable targets are not agreed with each trainee. Recording of targets on training plans and documenting of action plans is not complete in all cases. Rooms used for centre-based training are not ideal. Teaching takes place in rooms which serve as thoroughfares, causing training to suffer from interruption and noise intrusion. Off-the-job training on the Starting Line main programme is inadequate. Trainees experience work placements without formal arrangements being made for prompt support for any identified training needs. Such needs are addressed in the mainstream vocational programme, but this could be several months after trainees start on-the-job training.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

18. The company has an equal opportunities policy which was reviewed and updated in January 1999. The policy fully reflects changes in legislation to include compliance with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* and the TEC contract. It includes a statement committing the company to total support of, and provision of, equality of opportunity for all trainees and staff. The company has developed good working relationships with outside agencies to further its equal opportunities provision. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ equal opportunities fully supported by staff
- ◆ selection procedures promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ inclusion of equal opportunities issues within training programmes
- ◆ good recruitment of disadvantaged people
- ◆ effective marketing of equal opportunities
- ◆ effective analysis and use of performance data

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no reference to equal opportunities in some documents
- ◆ poor facilities at training centre for people with impaired mobility
- ◆ poorly documented complaints procedures

19. The policy and procedures for equal opportunities are well documented and clearly identify senior management's responsibility for implementation of policies. Staff fully support the company's commitment to equality of opportunity. Marketing materials show positive images of trainees from minority ethnic groups as well as reflecting a gender balance. The equal opportunities policy is detailed and identifies clearly forms of discrimination of which it is intolerant. There is, however, no formal system for the routine review of policies and procedures. Some operational documents have not been updated to include adequate reference to equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy does not make specific reference to trainees. Commitment to staff training specific to equal opportunities issues is not included in the staff training and development policy. Documents relating to trainee and staff induction programmes and job descriptions do not include references to equal opportunities. The selection and recruitment policy contains a statement of the company's commitment to equal opportunities. Procedures for advertising jobs and training opportunities reflect good practice in equal opportunities. Policy documents include an action plan for encouraging applications from people from minority ethnic groups, although there is no present staff member from these groups. Trainees' awareness of equal opportunities issues is good. Discussion of equal opportunities is included within the prevocational training programmes and the training agreement received by all trainees includes a clear statement of the company's support for equality of opportunity. Complaints procedures for trainees are poorly documented. Reference to complaints is made within the training agreement, but there is no clear indication of procedures to be followed and no stated undertaking by the company to deal with complaints promptly. Employment contracts for staff contain clear and detailed disciplinary and grievance procedures.

20. Performance data is routinely collected and used effectively to monitor performance. Data are collected for ethnicity, disability and gender and analysis is made by trainees' catchment area and occupational programme area. Arrangements for the monitoring of the recruitment, progress and ethnic origin of people with disabilities is effective. The company statistics file contains data relating to

analysis of trainee recruitment over the last three years. Routine use is made of careers service surveys and labour market information to inform management decisions. The company performs well in the recruitment of disadvantaged people. Over the last two years, 28 per cent of trainees were people from minority ethnic groups compared to an 8 per cent representation of people from these groups in the Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe districts. Since April 1995, 11.5 per cent of trainees have been people with disabilities. Recruitment of trainees over the last three years indicates a good gender balance. The average figures for gender were 46 per cent male and 54 per cent female. In the training centre access to the first floor training areas is difficult for people with impaired mobility and there are no accessible lavatories in the premises.

Grade 2

Trainee support

21. The company makes clear, through its mission statement, its commitment to enabling disadvantaged young people achieve their goals. All trainees are endorsed as having special training needs and trainee support is an integral part of the role of each member of staff. The primary aim of the company is to provide a supportive learning environment for trainees. All prospective trainees are interviewed using the company's standard interview pack. Trainees' prior learning and achievement are identified and recorded at interview. Trainees are assessed using the Basic Skills Agency's initial assessment pack and to identify literacy and numeracy support needs. Basic skills learning takes place through wordpower and numberpower programmes. Starting Line trainees undergo a five-week induction programme to determine their occupational suitability and preferences. Other youth trainees receive a one-day induction at the start of training. All trainees on work placements receive workplace induction carried out by the employer. Outside support agencies are used to provide guidance and advice in personal matters. All trainees sign a copy of Haydon Training's training agreement and are given copies to keep. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ emphasis on trainee support in company's values and mission statement
- ◆ staff provide effective, comprehensive and in-depth support
- ◆ safe transport system aids access to training
- ◆ close liaison with outside specialist support agencies
- ◆ employers provide high levels of pastoral care
- ◆ good working relationships between provider and placements enhance trainee support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ action plans not informed by initial assessment
- ◆ procedures for delivery of trainee support not fully documented
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of trainee support

22. The company places a high value on trainee support which is clearly reflected in all its dealings with young people. This commitment to support for trainees is clearly reflected in the company's mission statement. Trainees are well supported at all times throughout their training programmes. Staff have established close working relationships with trainees, who are able to talk in confidence about their problems and concerns. Staff effectively provide comprehensive support which adequately meets trainees' wide range of personal, social and training needs. Action to provide appropriate support is taken promptly. The company has established good links with outside support and advisory groups. Effective use is made of them to provide specialist help in solving personal problems. Trainees receive good levels of support in work placements. Effective working relationships exist between the provider's staff and employers to reinforce the support given to trainees. Care is taken to place trainees in work placements suited to their identified needs. Employers and supervisors are sympathetic to trainees' needs and are keen to help trainees gain in confidence and acquire occupational skills. Trainees in work placements are visited by Haydon Training's staff at least monthly and more frequently where considered necessary. Staff phone work placements on a weekly basis to check trainees' progress and identify any concerns.

23. All trainees receive a thorough interview. For trainees entering directly into occupational training, induction and initial assessment are well planned and thorough. The results of initial assessment however, are not always used to develop individual training plans or action plans for support. There is a lack of individuality in some training plans, and action plans lack clear goals for achievement and targets for progression. Where necessary, interviews are conducted at locations suited to the circumstances of each trainee. If the journey to the training centre is difficult for trainees, staff travel to meet the prospective trainee, sometimes in their homes. Appropriate financial support is provided to trainees where the cost of travelling would prohibit their participation in training. The company provides a taxi service for vulnerable trainees, including some young Asian women, to travel safely between home and the training centre. Many arrangements for support of trainees are informal and procedures are poorly documented. Monitoring of the effectiveness of trainee support is not systematic. Formal review and evaluation of support for trainees is not routine and has not led to clear action plans for consolidation of good practice and improvement of perceived weaknesses.

Management of training

Grade 2

24. HTS employs nine people, eight of whom are full time, to manage and deliver its training programmes. All management and administration of the company's activities are conducted at its premises in Aylesbury. The company owns the lease on a town-centre shop which provides sheltered work placement opportunities for trainees with special training needs. The shop manager combines her duties with assessing and tutoring, and is supported by two part-time sales assistants. The company has a clearly defined management structure. Overall responsibility for the management of the company lies with the managing director, who is the major stakeholder. A new part-time director has recently been appointed to strengthen company management. Responsibility for training is undertaken by a senior management team comprising the managing director, programme co-ordinator and senior employment officer. The company employs a full-time administrator to operate its management-information systems and deal with all routine financial matters. Inspectors found that judgements in the self-assessment report did not fully reflect the strengths of management. They awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open and effective communication
- ◆ productive working relationships with employers and outside organisations
- ◆ effective deployment of staff with clearly understood duties
- ◆ effective dissemination of information to all staff
- ◆ good management control of on-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor documentation of operational procedures
- ◆ no routine monitoring and review of management policies and procedures
- ◆ poor recording of management decisions and actions

25. Lines of communication are good. Open debate between staff is encouraged through the maintenance of frequent meetings. The senior management team meets monthly. Meetings are formal and minuted. Staff meetings are held fortnightly and used for general discussion and for conveying information. The daily practice of informal staff meetings and meetings with trainees contributes to the maintenance of effective dissemination of information. A new initiative has established regular meetings for NVQ assessors in order to share good practice. There are clear selection and recruitment policies for staff which promote equality of opportunity. Guidelines for the induction of new staff are well documented and new staff are well supported by colleagues. Staff have job descriptions. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are effectively deployed to make maximum use

of individual strengths and experience. Key responsibilities are clearly identified and all staff are fully aware of the management structure of the company. Procedures for staff appraisals are well established. Appraisal is used to inform strategic planning for in-house staff training and development. Staff are appraised annually by the programme co-ordinator. Outcomes of appraisal are recorded in detail and include identification of individual targets, training needs and company support requirements. Provision for staff development is adequate and is largely based on training programmes developed and delivered in-house. Staff attend external training events as appropriate.

26. Management-information systems are effective and used routinely to measure company performance against contractual targets. Performance levels are conveyed to staff monthly for discussion and implementation of remedial action. Performance targets for trainees' recruitment and achievements have been exceeded for 1998-99. Recent developments have seen the increased use of computerised data to meet contractual requirements of TEC. The company has a mission statement and a manual containing policy statements. Staff awareness and understanding of company policies is good. However, the monitoring and evaluation of policies are not formal and arrangements to review the effectiveness of procedures are not routine. There is no systematic annual review of policies. Recording of management actions and decisions is weak and is neither systematic nor formal. Several policies have not undergone major review for several years. Where it has been deemed that no change to existing policies is required, clear evidence to support this decision is not recorded. Generally, the documenting of operational procedures to support existing policies is poor. A business plan for 1999-2000 has been developed, which identifies programme development objectives. However, there is no clear identification of corporate objectives within the context of long-term business planning. Evaluation of market needs are superficial and no timescales are set for achievement of objectives.

27. There are good arrangements for management control of on-the-job training. The company's relationships with employers are strong and many have been established over a number of years. Contact with employers is frequent and employers feel well supported in their roles as placement providers. All prospective work placements are vetted routinely, and procedures for assessing working conditions and health & safety arrangements are robust and effective. Terms and conditions for the provision of on-the-job training are clearly stated in placement provider agreement forms. These forms, which are signed by all employers, help to ensure that trainees receive good standards of training and assessment and are able to work in safe environments free from discrimination.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

28. The company has a quality assurance manual detailing operational procedures and a quality assurance policy statement committing the company to continuous monitoring and evaluation of services to continue the development of a quality assurance programme. The company is subject to regular audits by external

organisations and meets the quality assurance requirements of the TEC and the awarding bodies. The company developed a detailed action plan to address points made in the report of the first inspection and many of these action plans have been implemented. Responsibility for quality assurance is held at senior level by the company director. Quality assurance is included as a standing agenda item for discussion during meetings of senior managers and at general staff meetings. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in the maintenance of good-quality training. All staff are given a copy of the company's business plan which contains identified aims and objectives of the company together with identified targets for achievement. All staff are involved in annual procedures to self-assess the company's performance.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no central framework for quality assurance
- ◆ absence of formal evaluation and review of training
- ◆ poor monitoring of quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ no routine analysis and evaluation of client feedback

29. Since the first inspection, there have been considerable improvements and many of the weaknesses identified have been addressed. The quality assurance manual sets out procedures to eliminate weaknesses identified at the first inspection. The company has reviewed and amended its first self-assessment report to reflect changes in the company and incorporate changes in policies and procedures. Generally, inspectors agreed with judgements made in the second self-assessment report. A central framework for quality assurance has been implemented which ensures systematic reviewing of training and the analysis and evaluation of information gathered through questionnaires from trainees and employers. Written procedures for all of the company's activities, however, are not yet completed. Inspectors judged that the progress made in quality assurance has been undervalued in the second self-assessment report and awarded a grade higher than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of self-assessment
- ◆ good procedures for the internal verification of assessment
- ◆ systematic use of trainees and employers' feedback
- ◆ effective use of internal auditing

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient document control
- ◆ little quality assurance of on-the-job training

30. The effective use of self-assessment to identify areas for improvements, identified by inspectors at the first inspection, has been consolidated. Progress in

the implementation of the post-inspection action plan has been monitored regularly and self-assessment has been effective in the evaluation of actions taken. Self-assessment has been adopted as an integral part of quality assurance and is used systematically to evaluate training and bring about continuous improvement. Senior management team meetings are used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan. Programme managers frequently liaise with trainers and assessors to identify strengths and weaknesses in training. Feedback from staff is validated by managers and incorporated into the company's self-assessment report, together with action plans.

31. Effective procedures for internal verification have been maintained. The arrangements for observing and supporting assessors are good. Internal verifiers frequently accompany assessors to work placements in order to observe and evaluate the quality of assessment of trainees. Internal verification is systematic and weekly meetings are held between the internal verifiers and assessors to share good practice. Concerns are fed back to the programme co-ordinators in order to effect appropriate remedial action. Management control systems, using trainees' data sheets, enable staff to track quickly the progress and achievement of individual trainees relative to set targets. Data sheets, which are systematically updated every month, enable staff to identify problems and provide the necessary learning support. Staff are well qualified as assessors and internal verifiers. The company is meeting its action plan targets for staff training to enable sufficient assessors to act as internal verifiers. At present nine members of staff have achieved internal verifier qualifications.

32. At the time of the first inspection, recently introduced feedback questionnaires were largely ineffective and not routinely analysed nor evaluated. This weakness has been addressed. The company now systematically obtains information from trainees and employers and this is analysed to evaluate performance and develop the company's services. At present, feedback questionnaires focus on clients' levels of satisfaction with dissemination of information and support systems, rather than seeking direct evidence of the quality of training. However, questionnaires are effective in gauging employers' levels of satisfaction with the company's support for trainees, communication, and frequency of visits to workplaces to review trainees' progress.

33. The absence of formal systems to evaluate and review training was identified during the first inspection. Much improvement has been made in this area. Members of the senior management team undertake specific reviews of individual off-the-job training programmes to evaluate performance and identify areas for development and improvement. However, most of the quality assurance activity focuses on off-the-job training, and there is little quality assurance of on-the-job training. In many cases, there are no written schemes of work for on-the-job training, and no systematic dissemination of information about training to workplace supervisors. Quality assurance of on-the-job training relies heavily on the review process and trainees' achievement. Performance indicators for on-the-job training are not defined in the quality assurance manual.

34. The company has developed and implemented effective systems for internal auditing to ensure compliance with quality standards stated in the quality assurance manual. Internal auditing is conducted within written annual schedules. Rigorous scrutiny of the findings of internal audit are conducted by senior staff to evaluate the effectiveness of operation procedures and arrangements. Internal audit reports are discussed at senior management meetings, and actions are discussed and agreed between the director and company staff before being put into practice. Absence of a central framework for quality assurance at the time of first inspection, has been addressed through the development of a quality assurance manual of procedures for training, and routine use of additional forms to support these procedures. However, the procedural guidelines for staff are incomplete and a system for document control has not been established from the outset. Some of the recently developed forms have not been numbered or dated, and it is not possible to establish the currency of the forms being used.