



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 2000

# Liverpool Theatre School

## SUMMARY

The quality of training in performing arts at Liverpool Theatre School is excellent. Staff focus on the performance tradition and strong links with the entertainment industry. Trainees are attentive and there is a high rate of qualification achievement. Participation by disadvantaged people is encouraged although the organisation lacks a clear strategy to recruit particular under-represented groups. Trainee support is less than satisfactory. There is good initial advice and guidance but periodic review and additional support measures are inadequate. The training programme is well organised but there are inadequate arrangements for private study. There is little analysis of management information and data. Teaching quality is regularly monitored. The quality assurance arrangements are too informal and lack a systematic review and improvement cycle covering all aspects of the provision.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Media & design	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	4
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent performing arts training
- ◆ excellent achievement and retention rates
- ◆ strong links with the performing arts and entertainment industry
- ◆ exemplary fairness of treatment
- ◆ comprehensive guidance and assessment prior to enrolment
- ◆ well-organised training programme
- ◆ collective commitment to improvement

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of some learning resources
- ◆ poor strategy to promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ poor review process
- ◆ inadequate arrangements for additional learning support
- ◆ policies and procedures not fully embedded and practised
- ◆ no systematic evaluation, review and action planning process

## INTRODUCTION

1. Liverpool Theatre School (the School) was formed in 1930 to provide an experience of training and practice in the performing arts for under-privileged young people in Liverpool. The School has recently relocated to a refurbished building in south Liverpool. Three principals own the company and have overall responsibility for organisation and management of the education and training programmes. Including the principals there are five full-time and 12 part-time staff. Occasional 'guest tutors' also contribute to the programmes offered by the School.

2. The School provides education and training in the performing arts to all ages and backgrounds. Previously, the School offered work-based training as a subcontractor to another training provider. It now has a direct contract for work-based training with Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (MTEC). Through this contract the School offers general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 in the performing arts. In addition, the School offers full-time education in performing arts at GNVQ intermediate level through franchises from two further education colleges and performing arts training to New Deal 18 to 24 year-old clients following the New Deal full-time education and training option.

3. Alongside GNVQs and NVQs in the performing arts, the School is accredited to offer NVQs in customer service and in training and development. They are also approved to offer a wide selection of professional body qualifications in the performing arts. Some MTEC and Further Education Funding Council (FEFC)-funded performing arts trainees and students access the additional range of NVQs, and all study for professional body qualifications.

4. At the time of inspection there were 31 MTEC-funded trainees. There were 35 students following programmes through franchise agreements funded by the FEFC. No New Deal clients were registered at the School at the time of inspection.

5. MTEC-funded trainees are based wholly at the School. It is the practice of the School that trainees are not placed with employers in the entertainment industries until their skills are sufficiently advanced to secure employment. This is usually at, or near the completion of, their training programme. In order to gain experience of professional practice, trainees mount and present live performances at the School and venues throughout the Liverpool region for the general public. Contrary to general practice, several accomplished trainees gain contracted seasonal employment experience with professional companies during their period of training. Groups of trainees are frequently requested to perform at events mounted by charitable bodies and professional associations in the region.

6. In support of its activities the School can rely upon past pupils who are now established in the world of popular entertainment. The School also draws on the

experience of other professional practitioners to contribute to the training curriculum alongside a body of established full- and part-time training staff, all of who have substantial experience in the performing arts.

7. The School is based in the Merseyside region, which covers five local authority districts: Knowsley, Liverpool City, Sefton, St. Helens and the Wirral. In May 2000, the unemployment rate in Merseyside was 8.2 per cent compared with the northwest of England's rate of 4.6 per cent and a national rate of 3.8 per cent. In some areas of Liverpool, unemployment rates are estimated at between 13 to 20 per cent. There is a high rate of long-term unemployment in Liverpool.

8. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers in Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton, (the local education authority areas in proximity to the School), achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was respectively, 23.6 per cent, 32.4 per cent and 48.7 per cent, compared with the national average for England of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

9. All Liverpool Theatre School staff made a contribution to the self-assessment process. Awareness-raising workshops were held, supported by MTEC to ensure staff had a clear understanding of the process. The findings and grades in the report were drawn together and agreed by all staff before publication. The grades awarded by inspectors agreed with those in the company's report for the occupational area, equal opportunities and quality assurance. Lower grades than those given by the company were awarded in the generic aspects of trainee support and management of training.

10. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Liverpool Theatre School in June 2000. They examined trainees' records, portfolios of evidence for assessment, awarding body documents, teaching and learning materials, company policies and procedures, other documents and contracts. Inspectors also observed and interviewed all MTEC-funded trainees and inspected 10 training, review and assessment sessions, seven of which were graded. They held 34 interviews with Theatre School staff, and attended a public performance given by trainees and students of the School.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Media & design		4	3			7
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>7</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Media & design (performing arts)

**Grade 2**

11. Liverpool Theatre School delivers part-time and full-time performing arts training for children and young people age between 3 to 25 years, including programmes within a work-based training contract with MTEC. This offers trainees intermediate and advanced GNVQs in the performing arts and entertainment industries. Trainees may also take the delivering artform development session NVQ level 3 and some trainees have gained a customer service qualification at NVQ level 2. A number of trainees also gained assessor qualifications. In addition, trainees have the opportunities to achieve professional body qualifications in both teaching and performance, offered by professional bodies including the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Allied Dance Association and International Dance Teachers Association. There were 31 trainees on the programmes at the time of inspection. Trainees complete intermediate

GNVQs in one year and then have the option to move to advanced GNVQs or NVQs at level 3. There are no trainees with employed status. Twenty-nine of the current trainees are women. Two trainees are from minority ethnic groups. There were 12 leavers in 1999-2000, five with NVQs and seven with NVQs and a job. In 1998-99, of the nine leavers, five completed with NVQs and a job and four left with an NVQ. The 1997-98 four trainees left with NVQs and jobs and the remaining three with NVQs. Inspectors agreed with the strengths in the organisation's self-assessment but found a different set of weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that in the organisation's self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ excellent performing arts training
- ◆ powerful focus on performance tradition
- ◆ excellent retention and achievement rates
- ◆ strong professional links with the performing arts and entertainment industry

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate study space and learning resources
- ◆ trainees lack motivation to complete written work

12. All the trainees work on the site of the Liverpool Theatre School for the delivery of the NVQ programmes. There are no work placements or on-the-job training arrangements. Elements of the intermediate GNVQ are assessed when trainees participate in performances outside the School. Performing arts training is of excellent quality and led by a good range of experienced and dedicated staff. Classes are given with attention to technique as well as creativity, by teaching staff who have many years of experience and lead groups of trainees through sessions at a good pace. Within dance and drama, staff demonstrate movements, routines and posture to the class themselves. A great deal of individual attention is given to each trainee who benefits from correction of their posture or style in dance classes. Trainees' performance skills progress rapidly throughout the programme. They build repertoire, technique, body strength and control. Intelligently structured timetable planning allows clear links to be made between the GNVQ units and the additional professional and teaching qualification. These elements are layered into the vocational programme and benefit the trainees by constantly raising their performance standards. In most cases and practical work that is prepared for examinations is used to complete elements of the intermediate GNVQ. The professional qualifications enhance opportunities for entry into a fuller range of performance-related work. Among many employers, there is a strong recognition and familiarity with the professional and teaching examinations. Trainees therefore benefit from obtaining these alongside their GNVQ. Good physical preparation and a range of performance skills throughout the theatre arts are achieved. This ensures that trainees are adequately prepared for the realities of the tough and demanding regime of working performing artists.

13. Staff at the School transmit their passion and enthusiasm for the performing arts to the trainees. A powerful performance tradition is sustained throughout the School and every trainee has real commitment to succeed. The professionalism needed to survive in the industry is imparted from staff to trainees. The trainees understand the demands of the profession they are training for and respond with the discipline required.

14. Retention rates are high. Achievement rates are sustained at a high level, both in the GNVQ programmes and within the professional awards and examinations. In the last contract year all trainees who started their programme of training completed and achieved their qualification aim. Attendance is good, with systems to follow up trainees' non-attendance.

15. Knowledgeable and professional teaching staff draw on their many years in the arts and entertainment field and provide realistic advice and guidance for supporting trainees' initial ventures into the employment field. Actors, dancers and musicians in current employment frequently come in as guest lecturers. Recently, casting directors from the film industry, pantomime and variety have given the trainees insight into the current state of the employment market. They also offer contemporary shifts to the curriculum, which complement the more traditional aspects that are offered on the timetable. The School ensures that trainees benefit from its wide-reaching network and contacts within the industry. The principals have a good relationship with entertainment management within the business and arrangements to secure the donation of ex-professional costumes for the trainees' use. There is an extensive collection of stage costume that is housed in a separate building close by. Other links allow the School to offer trainees performance opportunities and work experience, often with ex-trainees who remain extremely loyal to the staff and current trainees.

16. The premises have good practical teaching and rehearsal studios and theatre seating approximately 120. Spaces are clean, light, warm and airy and there are suitable floors designed for all types of dance. The school has invested in refurbishing the premises and in technical equipment to support performances. The teaching and rehearsal spaces are sometimes limited when there is a particularly large class and noise transference between rooms occasionally disrupts sessions. However, the school has no study centre, where trainees could access computers and other research materials. There is a lack of good study space generally. If trainees need to extend their knowledge or research topics for their assessments, scripts, music, reference books to place plays and musical in a historical context are not available on site. Staff rely on their own personal copies of plays, music and texts. Trainees are encouraged to attend the local library if they want to use study materials but specialist materials are not available from this source.

17. critiques of trainees' performances to their peers are encouraged and help to develop trainees' analytical skills. These feedback sessions on each other's practical work support the trainees' written assignments. Due to the often-

overpowering desire to refine performance skills trainees often struggle to maintain a balance between performance and completing written assignments.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

18. The School has an equal opportunities policy, which is reviewed annually. The policy promotes an environment of respect and names a contact, should there be any breaches of the policy. A confidentiality policy reinforces the requirements of the equal opportunities policy. There are clear procedures for grievance, appeals and disciplinary issues. There is reference to equal opportunities in the school's marketing and in the trainees and staff's induction programmes. Over the past three years, the trainees have been mainly white young women. None of the full-time staff are from minority ethnic communities and the principals of the School, as well as two of the three permanent staff, are women. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical. It identifies the first but not the second strength and it fails to identify either of the weaknesses in relation to failing to monitor or adequately promote equal opportunities. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that in the organisation's self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ participation by disadvantaged people encouraged
- ◆ exemplary fairness of treatment

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little monitoring of equal opportunities data
- ◆ poor strategy to promote equal opportunities

19. The School was founded in 1930 to provide people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds in Liverpool with experience in the performing arts. The school has retained this ethos and there is a caring and tolerant environment. Scholarships are offered to students who come from a disadvantaged background. These scholarships enable the trainees to access professional qualifications in drama and dance as well as the MTEC-funded GNVQ qualifications. Throughout the year advertisements are placed in the local press to attract people from all backgrounds to apply for an audition. Currently five out of the 31 trainees on the TEC-funded courses are receiving extra support. The school has excellent links with the local community, including those schools and organisations dedicated to assisting socially and economically deprived people. Personal contacts of the staff also help with sponsorships. A local Catholic organisation sponsors trainees and in return the students provide a performance annually to help raise funds for disabled people to visit the shrine of Lourdes in France.

20. The school has a caring, protective environment in which all are treated fairly.



Criteria are set for the initial audition for entry onto a course. While on the course, all trainees are informed of potential job opportunities and there is no favouritism in selecting those who can go forward to real auditions. Trainees with dyslexia are helped by the tutors to understand the requirements of their professional examinations. Where appropriate they are also helped to memorise drama parts. During the GNVQ examinations these trainees can have the questions read to them and are given extra time to complete their examination work if required.

21. Equal opportunities data are collected to comply with TEC requirements. However, these data are not systematically analysed by the school to predict trends. The data from the past three years shows that the most of the trainees on the TEC-funded courses have been white women. In 1997-98 only three out of 13 trainees were men and there were no trainees from minority ethnic groups. In 1998-99, two out of eight starters were men and again there were no trainees from minority ethnic groups. In the current year four trainees are from minority ethnic backgrounds and two out of 22 starters are men. The ethnic origin of applicants is not collected, so there is no means of identifying trends in the applicants, indicating those who are accepted and those who are rejected. Neither are data retained with regard to the progression of trainees on completion. Equal opportunities is not a standing agenda item for management or team meetings.

22. There is no strategy to counter the gender or ethnic imbalances in the recruitment of trainees onto TEC-funded programmes. Some visits have been made to schools outside the traditional catchment area in an effort to attract more men but this has not benefited from a coherent approach. There has been no equal opportunities training for staff. The induction for trainees includes reference to equal opportunities but its presentation does not benefit from the wealth of talent in presentation skills in this school.

23. There have not been any applications from people with mobility difficulties and so no adaptations have been made to the access to all parts of the building. Within the building there is limited access for trainees with mobility difficulties. However, a potential trainee who was offered a place last year has since contracted meningitis and as a result has lost several fingers and a leg. This trainee's place is being honoured in the autumn. The fact that she could continue with her chosen career in the performing arts at the Liverpool Theatre School has helped her recovery from the disease.

**Trainee support****Grade 4**

24. Potential trainees are invited to audition and their aspirations are discussed with a tutor. There is an induction process where information is given on health and safety issues, school policies and procedures and all paperwork is completed. Trainees take basic numeracy and literacy tests on entry. All trainees attend structured training sessions at the school. Work experience is in real live performances. Careers advice is offered to trainees at all stages of their training programme. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical. It identifies six strengths, some of which relate to other areas, which were confirmed by the inspectors. However, the report fails to identify the serious weaknesses in relation to the review process and the inadequate procedures for additional support. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that in the organisation's self-assessment report.

*STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive guidance and assessment prior to enrolment
- ◆ some good employment opportunities

*WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor review process
- ◆ lack of formal target setting
- ◆ inadequate procedures for additional support

25. Trainees arrive on the programme by several routes. Some come directly from school, some transfer from further education provision, and others through recommendations from dance schools or by making enquiries directly to the School. A number progress from the part-time classes and Saturday sessions to become full-time pupils. School staff attend local schools' open days as part of the recruitment activities and to encourage more men to participate. Whatever route they have taken prior to applying, all applicants are invited to audition for places on the courses. The guidance and enrolment process is thorough and seeks to ensure that all that enrol understand the commitment required and demonstrate the potential to achieve the target qualification. Applicants complete a form identifying their past experience and qualifications. At the audition each applicant is given the opportunity to demonstrate his or her ability or potential, in both drama and dance. This is through a set piece of their choosing. Potential trainees who are experienced in drama but have no experience in dance may be asked to copy a routine of steps, as demonstrated by the tutor or a current trainee. Those who have dance but not drama experience could be asked to read a piece or they may be given a situation around which they can improvise. In all cases the tutors grade the performances on appearance, ability and potential. From those who are inexperienced the tutors look for understanding of what they are doing, potential talent and flair, confidence and motivation. Their judgements are based on acceptable professional standards. Each trainee is either accepted immediately or

is given an opportunity to audition again, if they have shown potential but not demonstrated it well. Those potential trainees who do not demonstrate any talent or aptitude for the performing arts are advised to consult their career counsellor to find a more suitable career path.

26. The teaching and assessment is based on the premise that the trainees are being prepared for real work. The staff are uncompromising in expecting high standards of performance and behaviour. The staff's professional experience ensures that they are up to date with current practices in the industry. The school maintains an excellent network with local companies, professional organisations and successful past pupils. This network is used extensively to ensure employment opportunities, especially for dance trainees. Opportunities for drama trainees are less frequent but auditions have been organised at the school for film and theatre work. Dance trainees have had experience in a variety of performances both in the United Kingdom and abroad. Several trainees are offered work as extras in television soaps. The tutors are flexible in accommodating absences for work experience on an individual basis, giving extra one-to-one tuition if necessary. Trainees receive help to prepare them for work. A tutor guides them in finding opportunities in stage magazines or in the job opportunities that are posted on the notice board. Help is given with audition techniques and applications. For drama trainees, the need for research into the particular theatre and its artistic director is emphasised.

27. Trainees' progress is reviewed in a variety of ways, which are not co-ordinated. The principals interview each trainee annually. Course leaders produce reports once a term and personal tutors have recently been introduced to conduct 12-weekly reviews. GNVQ students receive written feedback after each assignment and all tutors give continuous informal oral feedback to trainees. The lack of co-ordination of these activities means that there is no clear picture of trainees' progress. For example, letters sent to parents in relation to late assignments are not considered in the 12-weekly review process. The termly reviews are written in a school-report style. They are wordy and imprecise and they lack clear objectives for the coming term. They often relate to personal behavior and presentation skills rather than progress in the qualification. The various reviews lack rigour and do not focus on progress in the qualification. There are no clear goals and objectives to be achieved before the next review. The individual training plans also lack targets. The plans show little differentiation and merely record the expected qualification outcomes.

28. Trainees who have personal problems or emotional difficulties do not have easy access to trained counsellors. School staff are not professionally qualified in counselling. In individual cases where the need for counselling has been identified staff have used their initiative and involved parents and trainees' doctors. Recently a confidential helpline was offered by the TEC but this is not widely publicised for the trainees. No arrangements have been established with referral agencies to assist with emerging or urgent cases.

29. Initial tests for basic skills were recently introduced but the results have not been collated or used to identify specific individual problems. Trainees are asked

to identify their perceived additional needs. Staff are not professionally qualified in the administration of tests or basic skills teaching. No member of staff has overall responsibility for ensuring the provision of additional support. Provision on a one-to-one basis is haphazard. The time and the content of the support are not logged and trainees are not obliged to attend any sessions. There are no resources to help with basic numeracy and literacy difficulties.

## Management of training

## Grade 4

30. Overall responsibility for the management of training at the School rests with its principals. The School has a three-year strategic plan for the period 1997-2000, and a current business plan with operational objectives. These are contained in a manual, which also includes a number of organisational policies and procedures. The manual is readily available to all staff. MTEC funded training leading to the intermediate-level GNVQ in performing arts is managed by a course leader, who also teaches on the programme. A team of full- and part-time teaching staff supports the course leader. With the exception of one, all staff are qualified assessors and several are qualified internal verifiers. The School takes great care to ensure assessment and verification is carried out in a proper manner and that appropriate records are maintained. Staff teaching on the GNVQ course understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff maintain their awareness of the training programme and progress of trainees through staff meetings, regular informal contact and paper-based communication. When vacancies arise, the selection and appointment of staff is made on the basis of curriculum demand, the applicants' past experience and the relevance of their skills to the existing training team mix. Contact with external agencies to facilitate work experience and employment for the trainee group is well developed and actively maintained. The organisation's self-assessment prepared prior to inspection failed to fully recognise the company's strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that proposed in the organisation's self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clear sense of purpose throughout the organisation
- ◆ well-organised training programme

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ underdeveloped management and information systems
- ◆ policies and procedures not established in practice
- ◆ no formal staff review and development arrangements

31. There is a clear sense of purpose throughout the School. Trainees and staff act in unison. All are dedicated to learning and developing their craft. The atmosphere created by managers and staff is lively yet disciplined and focused on gaining

employment in the performing arts industry.

32. The School's senior managers have recognised the need to 'move with the times'. They have introduced GNVQs and NVQs and combine these with traditional professional body awards that still have a currency in the entertainment industry. The training programme for MTEC-funded trainees is well organised and documented. There is a clearly set out curriculum plan articulated through assignments that stimulate trainees' interest and commitment. Assessment criteria are built into assignments. Assessment procedures are carried out in a thorough and fair manner. Internal verification is sound and occurs at set points during the period of the training programme. Feedback by verifiers to assessors to aid continuous improvement is verbal rather than documented. This feedback rarely includes actions to be taken by the assessor.

33. The management and information systems maintained at the School are underdeveloped. Sufficient information is retained to meet contractual and awarding body requirements. However, data are not systematically gathered and used to inform and plan. The organisation's business plan and three-year strategy do not feature as working documents with their attendant targets setting the agenda for the company. Records of meetings rarely show discussion or actions related to training and trainees' development. Record keeping in trainees' files is haphazard and uninformative. When debating and making decisions the organisation relies heavily on knowledge held by individual staff rather than from data or informative records.

34. The School has a range of policies and procedures to guide the work of staff and trainees. There is confusion as to which are policies and which are procedures. Much of the documentation is recent. Other than to meet compliance with contracts and awarding body specifications, it is difficult to see how many of the procedures relate to the purpose and operational objectives of the organisation. Practices in the School do not always follow procedures, and the School has not sought to use its best practices to develop current procedures. School managers have recently initiated a review of all staff to assess whether they understand and use the existing policies and procedures.

35. Staff take a very active interest in professional associations concerned with the performing arts. They use their membership and contacts to maintain and update the relevance of their skills and knowledge and bring this to bear in their teaching. The School's managers arrange for all staff to meet on an occasional basis to prepare for curriculum change and there have been organised events from authoritative bodies to reinforce such developments. Other than for the former, there is no arrangement whereby individuals are able to review their contribution to the organisation. Although managers have planned for the eventuality, individual staff do not yet have an agreed development programme designed to prepare them and the company for foreseeable changes to training directed by government or business objectives.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

36. The assurance of quality in the training curriculum at the School is through staff having uniformly high expectations of their own and trainees' work and operating within a self-critical culture. Staff view high levels of trainee retention and achievement as a key measure of quality assurance. There are few individual procedures and no over-arching framework for quality assurance within the School. In its self-assessment report the School did not demonstrate an understanding of the difference between management of training issues and assurance of quality. Self-assessment did not identify the real strengths and weakness of the organisation in this aspect but did correctly assess the grade, which is the same as that awarded by inspectors.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ collective commitment to improvement
- ◆ regular monitoring to improve teaching quality

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no procedures to systematically review the quality of provision
- ◆ little formal action planning to aid improvement

37. Staff of the School demonstrate a collective commitment to improvement. They are active in professional performing arts associations and awarding bodies using these to maintain contemporary knowledge and update their practical teaching skills. Some staff are representatives on national training organisations setting standards for the sector. Others act as external examiners to professional qualification awarding bodies. The School brings all staff together for collective events to review and develop the curriculum. Staff carry out annual reviews of the teaching programmes offered by the School. These meetings result in recommendations and changes to the training.

38. Regular monitoring of teaching quality and standards is undertaken by professional examiners from the awarding bodies. Awards can only be offered if the quality of the teaching and training meets set national standards. School managers frequently observe classes and offer recommendations for improvement. Staff have confidence in their colleagues' abilities and experience and will often ask colleagues to observe their teaching sessions and provide them with feedback.

39. There are no set procedures to systematically monitor and review the quality of provision. Evaluation by trainees is a recent development and though revised and in its second phase, the evaluations have not been used to improve practice. Evaluation from employers takes the form of letters of congratulation rather than the School seeking to draw informed critical appraisal of its work. Other than through the informality of the staff room and staff meetings there is little opportunity for staff to evaluate and review the work of the School in a measured

way.

40. The absence of systematic evaluation and review at all levels throughout the organisation results in a lack of formal action planning and organisation-wide plans for improvement. While staff are very aware of the need to strive for continuous improvement, this is clearly focused on performance skills and does not embrace the wider aspects associated with training and learning.

41. The School's self-assessment report was published in March 2000. The document provides a context for the organisation against the social and economic background in which it operates. Appendices provide an historical record of trainees' achievements and destinations. The separate reports on the occupational and generic areas did not provide sufficient background against which the strengths and weakness in the document could be set. Strengths and weaknesses were supported by reference to an evidence base held by the School. The self-assessment was submitted without an action plan. This followed at a later date and set some achievable targets for the size and nature of the organisation.