



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 2000

Catten College

SUMMARY

Catten College provides satisfactory training in care and less than satisfactory training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Hairdressing and care trainees work in a good range of work placements, but the beauty therapy trainees do not have work placements. Catten College's hair and beauty training salons provide a small range of equipment and stock and do not provide realistic modern working environments. There is restrictive access to the college building for trainees with mobility difficulties, making the theory training rooms and computer facilities difficult to reach. The college has a strong, well-developed system for pastoral support and effective referral systems enabling trainees to access a range of specialist support agencies. However, the review processes are ineffective and there is slow progress towards NVQ achievement. Staff display good teamwork and there are clear lines of communication. A broad range of equal opportunities activities take place to raise employers and trainees' awareness and to encourage widening participation in training from the community. The NVQ internal verification systems are well recorded, comprehensive and include good support for the work-based assessors. The management information systems are insufficient and data are not used effectively when making management decisions. The recently introduced self-assessment process is effective and there are many examples to show how self-critical analysis has been used to make positive changes to programmes.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	4
Health, care & public services	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of hairdressing and care work placements
- ◆ broad range of equal opportunities awareness-raising activities
- ◆ well-developed system for pastoral support
- ◆ good communication among staff
- ◆ comprehensive NVQ internal verification processes
- ◆ effective self-assessment process promoting continuous improvement

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress towards NVQ achievement
- ◆ poor off-the-job training facilities for hair and beauty
- ◆ poor access to off-the-job training facilities for those with mobility difficulties
- ◆ ineffective trainees' review processes
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient management information systems

INTRODUCTION

1. Catten College is a small, privately owned training organisation. Originally based in Dovercourt, Essex, initially it moved some of its training to Colchester in 1997 and the remainder in January 2000. The college is now based in a leisure centre, which is the only non-military building on Colchester Garrison in Essex. The college serves the local region with trainees being recruited from within a 25-mile radius. The college offers flexible training options and not all trainees attend the college premises for their off-the-job training. Some trainees receive all their training at employer's premises, while some others travel to the training centre.

2. In 1983, the current managing director established training for catering and community care and expanded a year later to include, beauty therapy and leisure and recreation, and five years later, hairdressing. At this stage, all training was subcontracted to a local college. In 1988, the college stopped offering catering training. The college currently holds a contract with Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based training for young people, for the year 2000-01, in the areas of hairdressing, beauty therapy, sport, recreation and leisure occupations and direct care. In addition to TEC-funded programmes, the college offers a range of related qualifications including basketball coaching, community sports leader training, Indian head massage, manicure, pedicure, cosmetic make-up and beauty, customer service, leisure and tourism, information technology and first aid. For the TEC contract, the college offers modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and other work-based training programmes for young people leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

3. The college currently has 56 trainees, of whom 18 are on hairdressing programmes, 10 on beauty therapy programmes, 26 on care programmes and two on sport and recreation programmes. In total there are 10 modern apprentices, 31 national trainees and 15 trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of these trainees, 35 are taking a first aid qualification and nine a customer service NVQ in addition to their NVQs. The grade for the observation of first aid training to beauty therapy trainees is included in the hair and beauty section. All modern apprentices and national trainees are taking key skills. Most of the trainees' work placements are small, independent businesses with fewer than 15 employees. The two trainees on the sport and recreation training programme were interviewed at their employer's premises by inspectors, to be included in the inspection sample for the generic areas. However, the occupational area of sport and recreation is not reported on separately owing to the low numbers of trainees.

4. In July 2000, unemployment in the area of Catten College is low at 1.9 per cent compared with the national average of 3.5 per cent. The main industries locally are communication, financial services, distribution, hotels and transport, which account for 29 per cent of total employment. Computing is an area of growth. Engineering and manufacturing are decreasing. Total employment is forecast to rise by over 1 per cent in 2000-02. Catten College's data suggest that 89 per cent of employers in Colchester are now aware of NVQs, which is an increase on



previous years. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Essex as a whole has 1.9 per cent of its population from minority ethnic groups, while Colchester itself has 2.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Catten College produced its self-assessment report for inspection in January 2000. The college provided inspectors with two updates to its action plan to show the interim progress between January and July 2000. Essex TEC provided the college with initial consultancy support for self-assessment in autumn 1999. A senior manager and administrator began the self-assessment process. In August 1999, the principal took charge of self-assessment along with another senior manager. The principal led a self-assessment team. The team includes four staff members and three trainees to represent different programme areas. The occupational areas in the self-assessment report are leisure, sport and travel, hair and beauty and health, care and public services, despite leisure, sport and travel not being included as a separate occupational section in the inspection. Catten College self-assessed its full range of work-based training programmes. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those given by Catten College in two areas and a higher grade in one area. The three other areas included in the inspection were awarded lower grades in each case from those given in the self-assessment report.

6. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Catten College in July 2000. Inspectors examined paperwork from the college and awarding bodies. They interviewed a range of the college's staff. Twenty-two work placements were visited and during these visits 21 workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors examined assessment and internal verification records, trainees' work, records of trainees' progress, review documents and NVQ and key skills portfolios. They observed monitoring and assessment visits in workplaces and interviewed 50 trainees. The following table shows the grades given to sessions by Catten College staff covering: interviews of prospective trainees, induction sessions, trainees' reviews, NVQ training and assessment on and off the job, key skills and first aid sessions. In addition, inspectors observed a session for Catten College trainees given by staff from the careers service, but this was not graded.

Grades awarded to observed sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty	1	1	4			6
Health, care & public services		4	1	1		6
Total	1	5	5	1	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty

Grade 4

7. There are 28 trainees on hairdressing or beauty therapy programmes. In hairdressing there are three modern apprentices, 11 national trainees and four trainees on work-based training programmes for young people taking NVQs at

level 1. In beauty therapy there is one modern apprentice and nine trainees on work-based training programmes for young people taking NVQs at level 2.

8. Hairdressing trainees work in local salons in Colchester and towns and villages within approximately a 15-mile radius. In hairdressing, most trainees attend college one day a week throughout the year. Four employers provide all practical skills training in their salons and their trainees attend college for key skills training and theory sessions only. A few trainees meet at a salon in a nearby town and are taught there by Catten College's staff once a week. The college's co-ordinator visits the trainees regularly and acts as a peripatetic assessor for those trainees who do not attend the college. If trainees do not have a work placement when they enroll at the college, the college tries to match a salon from its list of possible work placements to the trainee's requests and individual needs. The college has a small ground-floor salon with three workstations for practical training. The beauty therapy training is offered on a full-time basis with trainees attending the college for four days each week. Beauty therapy trainees do not have work placements. One modern apprentice does, however, have a work placement. The centre has three distinct beauty therapy treatment areas. One is a small salon with three treatment couches and one manicure workstation; the second is a separate treatment room with one couch used solely for wax depilation and the third has two illuminated make-up workstations. Hair and beauty trainees manage the combined reception area which supports the salon operations. Four part-time staff of whom two work in hairdressing and two work in beauty therapy give the training. All staff have current industrial experience.

9. Hairdressing national traineeships and modern apprenticeships were introduced in 1997. Between 1997-98 and 1999-2000, 26 per cent of trainees have achieved their intended qualifications. This was 30 per cent in 1997-98, while in 1998-99, 28 per cent achieved and 6.5 per cent remained in training. Inspectors agreed with one strength from the self-assessment report and identified others. They agreed with three weaknesses. The college had not recognised the good salon training available among its strengths or the lack of assessment among its weaknesses. Inspectors identified further weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality, well-resourced hairdressing workplaces
- ◆ good training from hairdressing employers
- ◆ flexible hairdressing training programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no work placements for all but one beauty therapy modern apprentice
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ insufficient off-the-job training facilities and resources

- ◆ lack of understanding of NVQ requirements by some trainees and employers
- ◆ slow progress toward NVQs and key skills achievement
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

10. Trainees work in a good range of well-resourced hairdressing salons. They work in busy commercial environments using a range of modern equipment tools and professional products. The standard of work in the salons ranges from a good to a high quality. Most employers provide regular training at their salons which strengthens and enhances the trainees' practical skills development in the college. Some trainees stay on after work for training evenings in their salons and others have clients to practise on as models in the daytime. Many trainees have their skills enhanced by attending manufacturers' specialist training courses, organised by their employers.

11. The college offers a range of training and assessment options for NVQ hairdressing providing a high degree of flexibility. Hairdressing trainees and employers can choose from a broad range of options ranging from weekly attendance at the college for practical and theory hairdressing training to all training being carried out at the employer's salon. This can be a totally mixed team approach between the college and salon's staff, or any combination in consultation to meet the NVQ requirements. These options are highly valued by salon supervisors and trainees. Most beauty therapy trainees are enthusiastic and well motivated. Staff encourage them to progress their careers, and one trainee has secured a highly prized job on a cruise ship. There is high attendance on the beauty therapy programmes based totally at the college. Trainees have carefully considered career goals and many have identified further training they require to meet their career aims. The careers service gives trainees annual sessions on curriculum vitae presentation, letters of application and interview techniques to supplement trainees' job-search skills. A survey of beauty therapy trainees who have left the programme showed a high proportion entering employment or further training. Trainees are offered the opportunity to gain additional qualifications in wordpower and emergency first aid. Each year, the hairdressing and beauty trainees put on a show for the general public, employers, friends and family to demonstrate their skills. This is well received and enjoyed by the trainees. This year it included a presentation from a well-known hairdressing company and local celebrity footballers as the models' escorts on the catwalk.

12. A lack of work placements for beauty therapy trainees prevents them from learning their skills in a commercial environment which operates under realistic commercial pressures. The college provides sufficient clients to cover the NVQ requirements, but the same clients are used regularly with trainees working on an average of one client each per day. Trainees miss out on the variety and spontaneity they might get from a commercial environment. The college recognises that the lack of work-placement opportunities and the limitations of the off-the-job training restricts it from offering the NVQ at level 3 in beauty therapy. Retailing in beauty therapy is underplayed with a lack of retail strategy incorporated into the training and assessment of the technical units. There are many missed assessment opportunities for both beauty therapy and hairdressing trainees. There are few clients on the books for the in-college hairdressing salons,

so trainees have to wait for the appropriate clients to be booked for them to cover the award requirements. Trainees often practise on each other, which restricts their own skills training opportunities. There is little use of work-based assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Some hairdressing salons have qualified assessors who are not using naturally occurring assessment opportunities. College assessors do not attend trainees' evening training sessions in the workplace to assess trainees. There are few witness testimonies, audio tapes, photographs or videos used by trainees in their NVQ portfolios. Instead there is a reliance on written evidence such as assignments, client sheets, and accounts of observations.

13. The theory rooms are small and space is restricted for necessary learning activities. The learning resources are poor quality and have no standard format. Some are poorly copied and badly presented. Trainees have an over-reliance on a small range of textbooks and videos in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are few training strategies used, with trainees spending much of their time reading books and making notes. There is a lack of interactive material used and little integrated use of information technology. Recently, hairdressing trainees were given a textbook each by the college so they can all freely access good reference material. The leisure centre in which the college is based is busy. The entrance from the leisure centre into the salons does not reflect a professional, good-quality working environment. The window displays are poor and the salons do not provide a good working environment.

POOR PRACTICE

The college hairdressing and beauty therapy salons are dark with little natural light. The reception area is also very dark and clients often have to be taken outside for colour consultations.

14. There is a lack of understanding of NVQ requirements by some trainees and employers. They are unable to relate the NVQ requirements easily to the treatments clients require which occur regularly in their salons and in training sessions at their salons. Hairdressing employers are not involved in the planning of the NVQ training to link salon activities to NVQ requirements and the trainee's abilities and level of progression. Trainees' progression by NVQ unit is tracked and displayed on the workplace staff-room walls, though they have little detail and are not very effective because most employers lack awareness of the NVQ unit content. There is a lack of synchronisation between on- and off-the-job training activities. The training in skills to do the job in workplaces is good, but employers' lack of knowledge regarding NVQs inhibits workplace training from being related specifically to NVQ requirements. Most trainees' progress towards NVQ unit accumulation and achievement is slow. Trainees rarely have any of the skills or experiences they have acquired before training identified and accredited to prevent them from repeating training in familiar areas and to speed them through unit achievement. Key skills training uses some occupationally relevant examples and there is some NVQ evidence accredited to key skills development to avoid repetition, although assessments are not integrated. There is poor retention and achievement of NVQs, modern apprenticeships and national traineeships.

Health, care & public services**Grade 3**

15. There are 26 trainees working towards NVQs in care. There are six modern apprentices working on the NVQ at level 3 and 18 national trainees on NVQs at level 2 in care. Two trainees on work-based programmes are on the NVQ for

young people at level 2 in care. Until 1999-2000, the college only offered work-based training programmes for young people in this occupational area. In January 2000, the TEC requested that all trainees convert to national traineeships if on level 2 or modern apprenticeships if on level 3. This change affected nine trainees who were partway through their programme and who needed to take key skills in addition to the NVQs. In 1997-98, two trainees converted to national traineeship programmes. Of the 21 trainees recruited, one remained on the programme, nine left with no achievement, five left having completed their individual training plans, and the remainder left with NVQs in varying stages of completeness. In 1998-99, four trainees converted to national traineeship programmes. Of the 17 trainees recruited to other work-based programmes for young people, two remained on the programme, two left having completed their individual training plans, seven left with no achievement and the remainder left with NVQs in various states of completeness. In 1999-2000, nine trainees were recruited to other work-based training programmes for young people. Five converted to national traineeship programmes. Two remained on their programmes. One left with no achievement, and the other left with a partially completed NVQ. There were also five modern apprentices recruited this year, all of whom are still in training, and 17 national trainees of whom only two have left early with partially completed NVQs. There are 16 employed trainees on the programmes with all other trainees in appropriate work placements. There are 16 workplaces involved in the programmes. These include residential and nursing homes for the elderly, services for people with learning disabilities, a care home for people with mental health problems and the district hospital. All work placements are within a 20-mile radius of the college. There are no minimum entry criteria for the programme and some trainees are employees when they join the programme. Other trainees are directly recruited for the programme and are found appropriate work placements by the college.

16. Off-the-job training is provided at the college. Level 3 trainees attend one day a week and level 2 trainees attend one day a fortnight. Training in the occupational area is in the mornings, run by one trainer/assessor who is occupationally experienced. Key skills training is given in the afternoons by a specialist key skills trainer. The care trainer/assessor is also responsible for assessment in the workplace. A target has been set to increase the number of work-based assessors. The college employs a part-time internal verifier to work on the care programme. Responsibilities for standardisation of assessment practice are shared between the trainer/assessor and the internal verifier. Meetings with employers are arranged four times a year to exchange information about the programme.

17. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and two weaknesses with a further weakness identified at a subsequent self-assessment meeting. Of the strengths, one was found to be no more than normal practice, one was confirmed by inspectors, one was more applicable to trainee support and one was linked to a weakness identified by inspectors. Inspectors found another strength concerning rigorous assessment. Of the weaknesses, one was confirmed by inspectors, others were not found and an additional one was identified by inspectors. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive off-the-job training
- ◆ rigorous assessment practices
- ◆ good retention of modern apprentices and national trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor key skills training and assessment
- ◆ slow progress to NVQ achievement on work-based training programmes for young people

POOR PRACTICE

The care and key skills trainers do not liaise to identify common ground or topics. For example in the morning care session the knowledge requirements for the NVQ unit in communication were covered and the same topic was covered in the afternoon key skills session.

18. All trainees attend the college for off-the-job training in small groups. Topics to be covered during the sessions are planned in advance and clear outcomes are set for each session. Training methods used include a combination of formal input, self-directed learning and one-to-one support and this effectively enables a range of learning styles to be met. The formal sessions are based on the knowledge requirements of the NVQ units. Throughout the training, clear links are made between theory, the NVQ requirements and workplace practice. Trainees clearly enjoy the training sessions, and when part of the day was given to key skills sessions they negotiated with the trainer to begin sessions earlier. The trainer encourages discussion so trainees can bring up topics which are important to them, and helps trainees to identify what might be suitable evidence to look for regarding each unit. The trainer has worked with each of the different groups to encourage a safe environment where trainees are able to discuss subjects openly and to learn from each other's experience. The training room is equipped with appropriate visual aids including a flipchart, overhead projector and television. Books, leaflets and other learning materials are available for trainees to use for their self-directed study. On-the-job training is of a high quality in care workplaces.

19. All trainees have regular work-based assessment of naturally occurring activities. For 75 per cent of trainees, this is done by the college's trainer/assessor. Where work-based assessors are available, they undertake assessment and this is encouraged by the college. Assessment planning is done in partnership with the trainees and it is well structured and clearly recorded so that trainees understand what is required of them. This gives them ownership of the assessment process for which they provide evidence in good-quality portfolios. The use of unit tracking forms means that trainees and their employers understand what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. There are regular and thorough observations which are clearly recorded and cross-referenced across the NVQ units where appropriate. Activity-based assessment is used, where possible, to make use of naturally occurring evidence. Trainees' knowledge is confirmed after the assessment using pre-set questions devised by the trainer/assessor. These cover all the knowledge requirements and are written in language which the trainees understand easily. Clear written and verbal feedback is given to trainees following assessments and this is supported by clearly recorded assessment decisions. Units are internally verified when they are complete and feedback is given to both the assessor and

trainee. A college certificate is given to trainees on completion of an NVQ unit to celebrate achievement until certificates arrive from the awarding body.

20. Key skills training is independent of occupational training. No structured training has been developed to teach key skills, application of number or information technology. During the sessions, trainees usually complete written work for their NVQs while individuals receive one-to-one support for key skills assignments. Key skills are not linked to the NVQ units in any way. Few links or references are made to the activities trainees are undertaking in the workplace and there are no opportunities for gathering naturally occurring evidence. There is no integration of assessment of key skills for current or planned NVQ evidence with no retrospective assessment of key skills against existing evidence. Trainees are unaware of how key skills fit into their programme, and some believe they cannot achieve their NVQ without key skills. Trainees do not have copies of the key skills standards or requirements. The trainer/assessor is working towards the key skills award and plans to use this experience as a development opportunity for incorporating key skills into ongoing NVQ assessment. Work has yet to be done on this.

21. Overall, the college has had few trainees achieve their NVQ or complete their individual training plan. Modern apprentices and national trainees have not yet been in training long enough to complete their programmes. This includes trainees who converted to these programmes. Until 1999-2000, all trainees were recruited on to work-based training programmes for young people and achievement was poor. Catten College has gradually been encouraging trainees to convert to national traineeships. In 1997-98, only five trainees achieved their NVQs, which was 25 per cent of the group that year. In 1998-99, this number went down to 3 trainees who made up 18 per cent. To date, there have been no NVQ achievements in 1999-2000. This low achievement is acknowledged by the college and actions are being taken to address this. This has included the appointment of a new trainer, who is beginning to improve the quality of training. An overall target has been set of 65 per cent of trainees gaining NVQs this year. To achieve this target, all trainees have clear and realistic targets for unit and qualification completion. Tracking documents have been designed and trainees and employers have a copy of these. There are regular tutorials to check progress and any problems are addressed through three-way meetings with the assessor, trainee and employer. The retention among modern apprentices and national trainees, however, is good, with only two national trainees leaving early in 1999-2000. The college has recognised the weakness regarding the assessment of key skills and has planned to double the number of work-based assessors to speed up assessment and take advantage of additional assessment opportunities. The number of NVQ units completed for this stage on programme by the current trainees is on schedule to meet this target.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

22. The equal opportunities policy is updated annually and is specific in its objectives regarding gender, multicultural education and open access. Co-ordination of equal opportunities is the responsibility of a senior manager. Equality of opportunity is discussed at senior management team meetings but is not a standing agenda item. Some data on equal opportunities are being collected and analysed. There is an established complaints procedure. Catten College sets targets for recruitment regarding equal opportunities data. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups is slightly more than is representative of the Essex community as a whole. Out of the 28 trainees on hair and beauty programmes, one is a man, two have disabilities and two are from minority ethnic groups. Of the 26 trainees on care programmes, three are men, one is from a minority ethnic group and there are no trainees with disabilities. All trainees on the leisure, sport and travel programmes are women, and no trainees have disabilities or are from minority ethnic groups. Two thirds of staff are part time and two thirds are women. There are equal numbers of men and women among the full-time staff. Staff range in age from 22 to 62, and none are from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report was accurate in its identification of strengths and weaknesses. However, inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of staff development on equal opportunities issues
- ◆ effective equal opportunities awareness-raising activities with employers and trainees
- ◆ broad range of new initiatives to widen participation in training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ restrictive access to training facilities for trainees with mobility difficulties
- ◆ missed opportunities to promote equal opportunities in marketing material

GOOD PRACTICE

The college funds gym sessions for a hairdressing trainee with physical disabilities to help her.

23. The role of the equal opportunities officer is clearly understood by staff. There is a good range of awareness-raising sessions for staff which address legislation, trends, stereotyping issues and methods of promoting equality. These are supported by a data file containing an overview of current and emerging legislation. Staff understand their responsibilities as regards the promotion of equal opportunities and its impact upon trainees.

24. The equal opportunities officer has introduced measures to raise awareness of equal opportunities among employers. The appropriateness of employers' equal opportunities policies are checked during the monitoring of work placements and, where necessary, employers are encouraged to adopt the college's policy and adapt it for their own purpose. Work-based training information packs for employers

clearly state the responsibilities of all parties as regards equal opportunities promotion, complaints and grievance. Employers' understanding is monitored during visits from the equal opportunities officer. During induction, trainees complete some original worksheets which challenge their views on gender and racial stereotypes. For example, they are given pictures of three people and asked which one they think is a footballer. They are then asked to discuss their choice, and consider if their choice was swayed by traditionally held stereotypical views. Reviews include continued information on equal opportunities issues. Trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues regarding gender, race and disability and know what to do in event of harassment and bullying, complaints and grievances. Training rooms and office areas display posters which challenge discrimination and occupational stereotypes.

GOOD PRACTICE

Induction materials to describe key equal opportunities to trainees are interesting and topical. They include photographs of footballers from different ethnic backgrounds to illustrate the points raised in an accessible and light-hearted way.

25. The college is introducing a new range of initiatives to widen participation in training. Links have been made with organisations representing disadvantaged young people. In one area of Essex, in which there are pockets of deprivation, a joint project is underway which seeks to raise the profile of work-based training among less academic year-10 pupils and disengaged pupils in year 11. Trainees participate in an annual hairdressing display sponsored by the local football club and involving its trainee players, during which efforts are made to promote opportunities for training in hair and beauty for school leavers and local employers.

26. Access to training facilities for trainees with mobility difficulties is restrictive. The main entrance to the college has steps with no handrails. The wheelchair ramp is not easily accessible. There are no dedicated car-parking bays. Lavatory facilities for those people with mobility difficulties are inadequate. The training resources are split between two floors and access to the first floor is by stairs. Simple contingency plans have been prepared so that trainees unable to negotiate the stairs can receive training on the ground floor, but this means that they do not have access to all the learning resources.

27. Marketing materials do not effectively promote equal opportunities. Photographs show stereotypical images of trainees undertaking occupational tasks. Photographs often use current trainees. There is a stereotypical gender imbalance by occupation across most programmes. There are just three men taking care, two of whom were recruited directly from employers, one man taking hairdressing and none taking beauty therapy or leisure, sport and travel programmes. However, the trainees are often trained in mixed gender and mixed ethnic groups, as trainees funded by other sources work with the TEC-funded trainees. For example, the leisure, sport and travel trainees work with trainees who are on a leading sports manufacturer's scholarship scheme including eight footballers who are men. While an open commitment to equal opportunities is stated on promotional materials, there is no attempt to challenge traditional conventions through example. Many of the marketing materials are densely textual for occupational areas in which young people are more practical, active and visual. There is a lack of targeted marketing material to address the gender imbalance on the training programmes.

Trainee support

Grade 3

28. Trainees are usually referred to the college by the careers service, their employers or by recommendation from previous trainees. Trainees have an individual interview of approximately one hour with a member of the management team, who explains the various training schemes and qualifications available at the college. Prior learning, work experiences and career aims are discussed at the interview. If the prospective trainee does not have a work placement or employer, the college arranges for a trial two-week work placement for them. When the trainee decides to join the college programme, they take initial assessment tests in literacy and numeracy skills. The results of these are used to make decisions about the level of qualification, training scheme and any additional support needs. The trainees have individual induction sessions with a member of staff at Catten College's premises. They can choose whether to watch an induction video or use an induction CD-ROM. A health and safety tour of the college and leisure centre's premises is included in the induction programme. A short test is used to check the trainees' recall of the induction process and any queries are dealt with at this stage. An occupationally experienced member of Catten College's staff visits the work placement for the trainee's work-based induction. All work placements have health and safety checks prior to trainees being placed and/or accepted as Catten College trainees.

29. Trainees have eight-weekly pastoral visits to their workplaces by a college co-ordinator. These visits are every four weeks for trainees who have been endorsed as requiring additional support to achieve an NVQ. In addition, trainees have eight-weekly tutorials with the college's occupational tutors. Trainees with additional numeracy or literacy support needs have fortnightly sessions for two hours with a specialist tutor at the college. One trainee has additional support sessions in the evening at the local further education college. The college has a range of links to specialist support agencies in the region. Staff from the local careers service visit the college to present sessions to groups of trainees, giving specialist careers advice and helping them prepare curriculum vitae, letters of application for jobs and interview techniques. Trainee support is the management responsibility of the college principal.

30. The self-assessment report was generally accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses. A weakness concerning induction has been addressed effectively and is noted by inspectors as a strength. However, inspectors found an identified strength concerning the accreditation of prior learning to be unsatisfactory. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive new initial interview processes
- ◆ innovative use of resources in new induction programme
- ◆ effective referrals to specialist support services

- ◆ good pastoral support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective review processes
- ◆ some ineffective preparation of realistic individual training plans

31. The new initial interviews are comprehensive. They are carried out with prospective trainees by a member of the management team. They form the first stage of the process leading to the trainee being enrolled onto a college programme. The features of the process, including the workplace trial period and feedback system for both the trainee and employer, are carefully explained. This gives the trainee good and clear information about the process. The interviewers follow a standardised application procedure and use an assessment form appropriate to the occupational area that the prospective trainee is interested in. NVQs, the different schemes and key skills are all introduced during the interview. The training and assessment methods are explained simply and clearly and the trainees are given financial and support information. The process is good and the interview itself is thorough, carefully paced, appropriately detailed and welcoming. The prospective trainee is not pressurised to sign onto a programme at the interview and the next stages are explained. Details are kept in confidential trainees' files.

GOOD PRACTICE

The college used the results of literacy and numeracy tests that a prospective trainee had achieved at a different local college to save the trainee from having to repeat the tests.

32. There is a good, flexible, visual introduction to all the college management staff on the new induction video, with the same information being on a CD-ROM. Each member of staff introduces a different aspect of the induction programme. Information is given clearly, and at appropriate stages the trainee is encouraged to pause the video or CD-ROM to read and complete the induction pack. At one stage, the instructions tell the trainee to use the audio-tape package and questionnaire and tour the college site to complete the health and safety awareness section. The information is clear, well received by the trainees and well remembered.

33. The college has good links with a range of local specialist support services. Initially, the additional support tutor, who has counselling skills, sometimes talks to trainees. He can advise on suitable external support, and the management team or tutors arrange this with the trainees. Specialist support has been arranged and paid for by the college for trainees with additional literacy and numeracy learning needs, trainees with emotional and social issues, those requiring counselling, and for those needing advice on housing and accommodation. There are good links with the local careers service which visits the college and works with the trainees to prepare them for employment or further qualifications.

34. There is good pastoral support for trainees from all college staff. The college staff work outside college hours to help trainees. This includes arranging transport for a trainee unable to use public transport and accompanying trainees to external counselling sessions, funded by the college. The college co-ordinators visit trainees in their workplaces at a minimum of eight-weekly intervals. In addition,

many trainees also have occupational assessors from the college visiting them in their workplaces. Trainees also have tutorials at college to discuss their progress every eight weeks. The college staff are approachable and easy to contact and this is valued by employers and trainees.

35. The review processes are ineffective. They do not systematically follow-up action planning from previous reviews and target setting is unspecific. The coordinators' reviews are not systematically linked to the tutorial reviews carried out by college tutors. Records of reviews are filed, and copies are not sent to trainees or workplace supervisors to remind them of the actions for the next review. The individual action plans are not systematically updated with completed review dates and some have planned review dates missing. The review processes do not drive trainees' progress and targets do not challenge trainees. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.

POOR PRACTICE

A trainee who has taken 18 months to complete an NVQ at level 1 in hairdressing has not had any of this work accredited towards the NVQ at level 2. The trainee has not been assessed for work towards level 2 despite being on the programme for four months and working in a salon.

36. Some trainees' prior learning and experiences are not effectively recognised when preparing their individual training plans. Trainees, employers and college staff acknowledge that some trainees are competent in skills for which they have not been assessed and require no further training. Some trainees are on NVQ level 1 programmes and are receiving additional support for numeracy and literacy, yet their practical work is of level 2 standards. Trainees do not have their occupational skills systematically and effectively assessed at the start of their programmes in order to speed them through areas they are familiar with. Neither does this happen systematically when they progress to the next NVQ level.

Management of training**Grade 4**

37. The management team of Catten College has changed since 1998, when the process of self-assessment started. However, final decisions on how the college will be managed continue to be made by the managing director, who founded the college in 1983. She now works on a part-time basis, although can be contacted by staff at any time. The new senior management team comprises the college principal, development manager and director. Senior management meetings are held regularly and the team work closely together on all aspects of business. The four full-time staff members form the management and administration team. They include the three senior managers and an administrator. The old and new management teams are family members and long-standing friends. In addition, there are nine part-time members of staff who make up the training and assessment team. These team members maintain their professional competence through either owning their own business or working in an appropriate occupationally related environment. Staff numbers have decreased since the time of the self-assessment report, as a result of retirements and ill health. The two members of staff for beauty are past trainees. There is one subcontractor who provides special needs support in literacy and numeracy. The college was accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1998. It complies with TEC requirements. Until the self-assessment process was established, management decisions and data analysis were

carried out informally.

38. The self-assessment report recognised the strengths surrounding communication and the recent development in procedures, but did not acknowledge the range of staff development activities as a strength. Self-assessment identified three weaknesses. Two relate to trainee support issues and the third, about the lack of use of data analysis, was agreed with by inspectors. In addition inspectors identified further weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good team-working and clear communications
- ◆ clearly recorded range of new and revised policies and procedures
- ◆ wide range of staff development activities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient management information systems
- ◆ ineffective staff appraisal system
- ◆ no contracts with external parties to clarify roles and responsibilities
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

39. Staff are kept well informed about the college's work. There are a range of formal and informal meetings which involve both full- and part-time staff. Trainees' representatives from all occupational areas are invited to attend these. The meetings are based on the action plans drawn up through the self-assessment process. Through these meetings, staff are kept up to date with the numbers of trainees on the programmes, and the status of various projects and developments within the occupational areas. Staff also discuss progress and set new targets and actions for the future. New policy documents are issued and discussed at these meetings. Effective use is made of wall charts which give information on trainees' progress and expected achievement dates. The management team uses a wall chart to plan meeting dates and actions. This is in a prominent position in the manager's office to remind staff. It is used to record, on a monthly basis, key points from the strategic plan. These are initialed once completed. All meetings are minuted, although there is no set format for these minutes, and action points are not highlighted on the minutes to review. No formal agendas are sent out before the meetings.

40. As a result of self-assessment, new policies and procedures have been produced. These are in a flow chart format. They are easy to follow on a step-by-step basis, ensuring that nothing is missed out from training processes, such as initial interviews and health and safety assessments.

41. Staff have been on a variety of courses during the last year. Training on equal opportunities and health and safety issues are mandatory for all staff. All staff are currently undertaking key skills training. Occupational assessor and internal

verifier training is provided when requested by individual staff. There is no separate budget for staff development. Managers allocate money for any courses which are thought to be of benefit to both staff and the college. No request for training by staff has been refused.

42. Until recently, management information has been held on a computerised system designed to provide information for the TEC. This information does not easily provide the college with the statistics required to show the level of achievement and retention in occupational areas. The new management team is unfamiliar with all aspects of the recently developed management information system. Reports produced are not always presented in the most appropriate format. There are some paper-based systems used as back up.

43. There has been a staff appraisal system for several years. The system is based on self-assessment by staff of their abilities and training needs. There is no upward appraisal of line managers. Training observations are not included in the process. Changes in job roles and responsibilities are not reflected in discussions, and training needs are not identified. The appraisal scheme does not inform the strategic or recruitment plan. Some staff have moved into roles in which they do not have the appropriate occupational knowledge or know how to adapt materials to meet the needs of different types of trainees. Performance targets for the company and individuals have been set this year based on recent evaluations. These will be reviewed annually and used in the appraisal process.

POOR PRACTICE

The management team and staff have not received any formal appraisal training, as either appraisers or appraisees.

44. Employers and subcontractors do not sign a contract or a formal agreement to clarify their roles and responsibilities. New employers' handbook has been developed recently, and there are plans to include a contract in this. The college does not observe training by the subcontractor. Assessors and co-ordinators visit trainees at work placements. Logbooks have recently been introduced for trainees to encourage them to make links between their on- and off-the-job training. Effective use is not always made of staff's time when visiting the workplace, and opportunities to link on- and off-the-job activities are missed. The college does not take the opportunity to feed back information on quality and policy issues to employers.

45. Despite the recent introduction of the logbooks, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. There is insufficient involvement by employers in planning the training programmes. Some employers lack awareness of the content of the NVQ work carried out at the college and of their own training responsibilities. Few employers have written on-the-job training schedules and some trainees repeating training in topics at college and work.

Quality assurance**Grade 3**

46. Catten College has two senior managers who work together to develop quality assurance policies and procedures. As a result of self-assessment, the formal quality assurance strategy was begun. Staff are informed about quality assurance by induction and ongoing self-assessment meetings. Manuals containing the

policies are available to all staff and have recently been sent out to employers. Trainees are made aware of the policies relating to them during induction.

47. The college produced a self-assessment report which is mostly accurate and which inspectors support in many areas. The strengths which had been identified were confirmed as being fundamental to the changes that had taken place within the college. Internal verification processes had not been identified by the college as a strength. Two weaknesses in quality assurance which had been identified were confirmed by inspectors but three others had been corrected since the writing of the self-assessment report, seven months prior to inspection. However the college had not recognised the importance of the inaccuracies in some of the documents it uses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective self-assessment process leading to self-critical analysis and change
- ◆ effective analysis of new quality assurance procedures
- ◆ comprehensive internal verification processes for NVQs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little quality assurance of training activities
- ◆ poor quality assurance of documents
- ◆ some lack of understanding in the use of data

48. All members of Catten College are involved in the self-assessment processes. They are positive and enthusiastic about it and the changes implemented as a result. Monthly meetings are held to look at the action points. The self-assessment report action plans were updated throughout the period leading up to inspection to keep the inspection team informed of progress. The college has produced a new set of targets, including improving the use of evaluation of data, increasing the use of assessment in the workplace and introducing a formal contract for employers. The self-assessment process highlighted problems with the collection and use of data. Changes have been made and action taken to address these issues. The biggest effect has been on the rate of trainees leaving early. Use of the new quality assurance procedures highlighted which programmes had problems with retention and closer monitoring and changes to courses has reduced the number. There was no formal input from employers into the self-assessment process. Trainees are encouraged to use a suggestion box for complaints and to give feedback on their programmes, which are used to feed into the self-assessment process.

49. Before the self-assessment processes were implemented, many policies and procedures were carried out on an informal basis. There is now a new quality assurance strategy from which new policies have been developed. These are issued to all staff within the college. Many of these policies have been introduced in the last six months. There has been an audit on approximately 25 per cent of them. Any non-compliance has been recorded and an evaluation has been carried out as to whether there is a problem with the policy or with staff's implementation of

procedures. Changes have been made and support given where necessary. At present, the college's quality assurance system does not extend to subcontracted training.

50. Internal verification within the NVQ process varies between the two vocational areas, but is comprehensive in both. There are different policy documents for all vocational areas. These policies are well established and were in existence before the development of the new strategy. Detailed planning for internal verification of NVQs ensures folders are seen at least three times during the training programme. Verification of assessment in the workplace takes place twice a year. A specialist vocational internal verifier is employed to monitor the care programme. Detailed records are kept but not always put into the trainee's folder. More time has been allocated for the hairdressing internal verifier. A lack of time had been highlighted in the external verification report. Internal verification is introduced to trainees in the induction video, and all trainees are aware of the process about the roles of the internal and external verifiers.

51. Internal audits and quality assurance do not ensure consistently high standards across all areas of training. A policy for training observations has recently been introduced and approximately 50 per cent of the in-house staff have been observed. There have been no observations of training in the workplace or at the subcontractor's premises. Some in-house training sessions observed by inspectors were not well planned. There is no system for monitoring the resources used by staff. Poor-quality handouts and old teaching resources are being used in some classes.

52. Inconsistencies in documents lead to confusion. A document register has been created to keep track of the versions of the quality assurance procedures. This has not been maintained, so it is not possible to be sure which version of a document should be in use. Signatures are missing from some documents, such as appraisals and internal verifiers' feedback. Incorrect addresses for the college appear on some individual training plans and staff changes have not been made on the TEC contract. Staff details are not always correct, with one curriculum vitae missing from files and one curriculum vitae containing incorrect information. There is no procedure for standardising the way feedback is given to trainees when key skills portfolios are called in for assessment. Some are given detailed feedback while others do not contain any evidence of assessment.

53. Action planning from the evaluation of data has started recently. It is not presented in a consistent format for use when making decisions. Some data are presented in the form of tables, others as summaries with action plans, and others as text. Textual evaluation of the retention and achievement data is confusing. There is no evidence of how actions taken on information collected from trainees and employers are fed back to them. Little use is made of information technology to collate and analyse data. Few staff are trained to use computer software for this purpose. Some data in equal opportunities are being collected and analysed but these have only recently been used for action planning.