



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 2000

3E's Enterprises Ltd

SUMMARY

3E's Enterprises Ltd offers good training in care. Trainees have good work placements where they receive sound training and carry out a wide range of tasks. There are inadequate policies and procedures for the promotion of equal opportunities. Trainees with additional needs receive good support. There is, however, no initial assessment of trainees' basic or key skills. Individual training plans are not updated. Management responsibilities are not clear and management procedures are inadequate. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ good support for trainees with additional needs

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ poor arrangements for initial assessment
- ◆ little supervision of subcontractors
- ◆ inadequate management procedures
- ◆ poor quality assurance systems

INTRODUCTION

1. 3E's Enterprises Ltd (3E's) is a wholly owned subsidiary of City Technology College, Kingshurst. It was formed in 1990 to be a link between the college and the local businesses and community it serves. 3E's contracts with Birmingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and at the time of inspection there were, under this contract, eight trainees in business administration, five in management and professional services, nine in customer service and 26 in early years care. The inspection covered early years care only. In addition, 3E's also subcontracts with the TEC for the employment option of the New Deal. Three clients are undertaking NVQ units in early years care, three in playwork and one in customer service. Three full-time members of staff work in training, assisted by a part-time trainer and assessor who works 10 hours per week. Two of the full-time staff work in care; the other acts as development manager and has responsibility for the TEC contract. In addition to its training provision, 3E's offers a range of other services to the local and business community. These include nursery provision, Internet services and educational consultancy and school regeneration. Management of the whole company is the responsibility of the associate director.

2. Most of 3E's trainees come from North Solihull. This is an area where unemployment rates are high. TEC figures show an average unemployment rate of 14 per cent, with male unemployment at 18.4 per cent and, for the 18 to 34 age group, 30 per cent. Unemployment is disproportionately high amongst minority ethnic communities at 21.3 per cent. These figures compare with an average unemployment rate in the region of 4.5 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic communities is 2.9 per cent although in some parts of Solihull the figure is higher.

3. Over 70 per cent of employment in the Birmingham area is in service industries, with over 20 per cent of jobs in public administration, health and education and a similar proportion in banking, finance and insurance. The distribution sector and hotels and restaurants provide just under 20 per cent of jobs. The remaining employment is in production and construction, and most in manufacturing. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Birmingham and central England was 40.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of 16 year olds going into further education and training in Birmingham and central England was 81 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The self-assessment report was drawn up by the development manager. All staff were involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment process was overseen by the associate director. The report gave a good description of the training provided by 3E's. Many of the strengths identified in the report, however, were no more than normal practice. The grades for generic aspects in the self-assessment report were, in the main, higher than those awarded by the inspection.

5. Three inspectors spent a total of nine days with 3E's Enterprises Ltd. Inspectors interviewed 26 trainees and 11 supervisors or employers. They conducted one interview with off-the-job management staff, 13 interviews with the provider's staff and one with the subcontractor's. Inspectors looked at 32 trainees' files and 14 portfolios. They studied other documents, including TEC contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance documents, minutes of meetings and promotional materials. Inspectors observed two training sessions and awarded a grade to one of them. They also observed one assessment and two reviews of trainees' progress.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

6. 3E's offers training leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. There are 32 trainees of whom 5 are national trainees, one a modern apprentice and six are New Deal clients. The remaining 20 trainees are on other youth training programmes. Twenty-two trainees are undertaking an NVQ at level 2 with the remainder working towards an NVQ at level 3. The trainee on the modern apprenticeship programme is employed, as are some trainees on other programmes. Trainees are placed in one of 15 privately owned day nurseries or schools. All trainees live near their placements. Both members of the 3E's care support team are occupationally qualified. Many of the workplace supervisors are qualified assessors, 3E's assessors carry out all on-the-job assessment for 3E's trainees. Some on-the-job training is given by the placement supervisors. Trainees attend off-the-job training once a week at the 3E's premises. Trainees who need extra help or support are seen on a one-to-one basis as required. Trainees are able to follow additional off-the-job training courses leading to qualifications which complement their NVQs. These include qualifications in first aid, child protection and food hygiene courses. Trainees are visited in placement every three months for their formal reviews. At other times, contact is maintained by telephone and through the weekly training sessions. The retention rate is 75 per cent and above the average in the local TEC area. In 1998-99 the trainees' achievement rates were

80 per cent and in the current year to date, they are 32 per cent. Some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report represented no more than normal practice, or belonged in a generic area. Inspectors identified further strengths and agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ comprehensive and well-structured portfolios
- ◆ demanding targets for trainees and clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delay in assessing some trainees' key skills

7. The majority of placements for trainees in childcare are well resourced and offer trainees opportunities to gain work experience. Trainees have access to qualified staff, good equipment and relevant training materials. Trainees are given the opportunity to receive a broad range of work experience across all the required age ranges. If a placement, such as a school nursery, cannot provide the requisite range of experience, staff second trainees to other placements. Communication between placements and 3E's is good and staff in placements are well satisfied with both the calibre of the trainees and the quality of the training they receive. Trainees are given the opportunity to attend up to three interviews before they decide which placement they want to use. In practice, the majority of trainees choose after one interview because 3E's placements carefully, matching the trainee's needs to the placement. Many of the work-based supervisors are qualified assessors, and although they do not assess 3E's trainees, their knowledge of the whole NVQ process enables them to monitor trainees' progress carefully and provide useful on-the-job training and feedback.

8. Off-the-job training takes place once a week on Monday for level 2 trainees and on Friday for level 3. There is an additional opportunity on one day each week, for trainees to receive additional help on a one-to-one basis. The training programme follows the academic year, beginning in September. Trainees know which NVQ units they must obtain. They have a clear timetable showing the dates by which they must complete the units. Off-the-job training is well structured and varied. Tutors use a variety of teaching methods. Examples of trainees' work are on display in the training room. All subjects covered are clearly related to the particular element or unit being addressed. Trainees are encouraged to be as fully involved as possible in the learning process and tutors use different methods and activities to help trainees to acquire the theoretical knowledge and evidence they need in order to obtain their NVQs. Priority is given to ensuring trainees perceive

the link between on- and off-the-job training. Trainees have a clear understanding of the relationship between the two and how they complement each other.

9. Portfolios are well constructed to show a wide range of evidence relating to each element and unit. Trainees' progress is clearly recorded and training plans are drawn up on a weekly basis so that trainees are always aware of their progress and the evidence they need to collect at any one time. Trainees are taught to be as thorough and rigorous as possible in collating their evidence. The evidence in their portfolios is broad in its scope. Trainees at level 3 are responsible for drawing up their own assessment plans as part of their NVQ and level 2 trainees are also encouraged to acquire this skill.

10. Trainees are kept well informed of the extent of their progress. They are set, and agree to, realistic targets each week. Training plans are used well. Where trainees are slipping behind, extra help or support is given both by assessor/tutors and workplace supervisors.

11. The programme with its fixed start and finishing points at the beginning and end of the academic year, does not suit the needs of trainees who wish to participate in it on a roll-on, roll-off basis. Trainees who start after the beginning of the academic year sometimes have difficulty in catching up on the work already covered. Trainees who enrol at other times join the off-the-job course which has already started, then catch up on missed lessons when they are held in the next academic year. Some trainees have chosen not to do this, as they have insufficient confidence to join an already established group. These trainees then have to wait until the next September to start their theory training. Trainees then spend many months in their placement before they are assessed. Modern apprentices have had to wait to complete their key skills assessments because the member of staff who was responsible for this aspect of training left the company. Another member of staff will shortly take over responsibility for key skills training.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

12. Responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the associate director. 3E's does not have policies or procedures to protect trainees from discrimination. Equal opportunities data are collected and analysed to meet TEC requirements. There are currently three trainees from minority ethnic groups in training with 3E's and no trainees have identified disabilities. Eighty per cent of trainees are women. Most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report represented no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective action to recruit from under-represented groups
- ◆ easy accessibility of premises to people with mobility difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities
- ◆ little promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ little staff training on equal opportunities
- ◆ no monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

13. 3E's has recently taken effective action to recruit members of minority ethnic groups to training programmes. Three of the 56 trainees on a programme at the time of inspection were from a minority ethnic background. 3E's has taken part in careers conventions at local schools whose pupils are predominantly from minority ethnic backgrounds. All trainees who apply to 3E's are given an interview. The age, sex and ethnicity of every potential trainee are recorded. Potential trainees' progress towards final recruitment is monitored carefully. Seven trainees from minority ethnic groups have been recruited and have accepted placements to start training when they leave school.

14. The 3E's site is easily accessible to trainees with mobility problems. The single storey building has ramps at every entrance and inside the building. 3E's uses a local organisation to assess trainees who have learning difficulties. The organisation gives 3E's advice on the equipment and resources which the trainees will need in order to carry out the training programmes in full.

15. The organisation has an equal opportunities statement. This short document states that 3E's is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity. It includes a statement that the organisation will pursue a policy of non-discrimination, foster the 'spirit' of equal opportunities and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy statement. There are no detailed policies or procedures in place to ensure the protection of trainees or staff against discrimination. The policy document makes no reference to specific current legislation relating to equal opportunities or to the policies and procedures of the parent city technology college. Their policies and procedures do not refer to work-based trainees nor do they cover the protection of training staff in the policy to counter bullying and harassment.

16. Recruitment advertising and marketing material distributed at careers conventions, sent to employers or given to potential trainees contains photographs presenting stereotypical images of male and female roles in the workplace. There are no positive images of people with disabilities and pictures of people from minority ethnic groups are not included in the publicity material. The text contained in promotional material does not affirm the organisation's commitment

to equality of opportunity or make reference to the recruitment of trainees from under-represented groups.

17. The equal opportunities policies, procedures and practices of employers providing placements for trainees are not checked. There is no monitoring or discussion of equal opportunities issues with employers. There is minimal reference to equal opportunities in the trainees' handbook issued at induction. This merely refers trainees to the 3E's TEC contract and statute law without further explanation or guidance.

18. There has been little staff training on equal opportunities. 3E's relies on the TEC and a local disability resource centre to provide up-to-date information on current equal opportunities issues. 3E's does not routinely receive information from external agencies directly associated with the promotion of equal opportunities and staff are not routinely updated on equal opportunities issues.

Trainee support

Grade 4

19. All prospective trainees are invited to an initial interview. Once accepted, trainees are offered up to three interviews to allow them to find the right placement. Once in placement they are allowed up to three different locations if there are problems with the first two. Trainees are given an induction during which they are informed of their rights and responsibilities. The induction takes place over two days for those who start in September. For those who join at other times, induction is carried out on a one-to-one basis. The induction pack includes contract details, an outline of the relevant NVQ and a trainees' handbook. As part of the induction pack, 3E's issues a 'record call sheet'. All contact with trainees other than progress reviews is recorded on this sheet from the start to the end of the programme. Trainees are visited every three months in their work placements and some are also seen on a weekly basis at the training centre. Those trainees who need extra support are seen more frequently and 3E's runs an open training and support session each Wednesday for trainees who need more specialist or one-to-one support. Trainees have access to the full range of facilities on offer at the city technology college. Inspectors did not agree with some of the strengths in the self-assessment report and considered others to be no more than normal practice. They found some strengths that the provider had not identified. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support for trainees with additional needs
- ◆ ready availability of city technology college facilities to trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate induction for some trainees
- ◆ no key skills assessment
- ◆ no basic skills assessment
- ◆ failure to update most trainees' initial training plan

20. Trainees are well supported by 3E's and placement staff. They are able to call staff outside working hours if they need to and staff are willing to provide the necessary support and advice to enable trainees to complete their programmes. A recent example is that of a trainee with dyslexia who finds it easier to read text on blue paper. All documents and information given to the trainee are copied onto blue paper for her. 3E's staff are flexible in their approach to meeting trainees' needs and will do all they can to help trainees to succeed. Two Muslim girls on the New Deal have opted to complete up to six units of the childcare NVQ. Some of the evidence they need to gather involves singing in public, which their religion forbids. Staff have worked together to find a way to enable the trainees to achieve their qualification without compromising their religious beliefs.

21. 3E's is adjacent to the city technology college and trainees have access to a range of college facilities in addition to those available to them at the provider's premises. All trainees can use the college library and other resources are available where appropriate. Trainees pursuing the NVQ in early years care and education have access to the domestic science room for project work. Business administration trainees use the college intranet and also use e-mail to communicate with their tutors. Tutors also use the modern information technology facilities as a teaching resource.

22. The type of induction trainees receive depends on which occupational area they are in and what time of year they join a programme. Childcare trainees who join in September receive a comprehensive two-day induction which includes an introduction to the NVQ, health and safety, equal opportunities and the grievance procedure. There is also an emphasis on team building. Trainees are told what 3E's and their placement expect of them. Business administration trainees receive a shorter and less effective induction. Some trainees do not have a clear understanding of their programme, rights and responsibilities. Where childcare trainees join the programme at other times of the year, or for trainees in occupational areas where training is subcontracted, induction takes place on the job. The focus of this induction is on the NVQ process. Trainees are not given an adequate explanation of policies and procedures. In some instances, trainees did not receive any information on equality of opportunity in their induction.

23. At present, there is no initial assessment of trainees' basic skills or key skills. Key skills training was introduced last year and some level 3 trainees started training. The member of staff involved left however and trainees were not assessed for many months. One member of 3E's staff has now completed key skills training and will soon begin work with those level 3 trainees who need to complete their

key skills units. Basic skills assessment will begin with the next new intake and there is a planned programme to assess over 30 potential trainees next month but so far, no trainees have been assessed in basic skills.

24. Individual training plans are drawn up when a trainee first joins a programme. Assessment of prior learning does not always take place. Where it does, any accreditation of prior learning is not always noted on the individual training plan. Most trainees do not have their individual training plans updated to take account of changes in their targets, or circumstances. The individual training plans of trainees on care programmes, however, are updated regularly. These trainees are made fully aware of the extent of their progress.

Management of training

Grade 4

25. 3E's is controlled by a board of directors composed of the principal and directors of the city technology college. The board meets regularly and discusses all aspects of 3E's business. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the associate director, who visits the training centre on a regular basis but who spends a significant amount of his time on the management and development of other aspects of 3E's business activities. The roles and responsibilities of staff, however, are about to change. At present, the development manager is responsible for the management of the TEC contract. He also acts as a mentor to the other training staff, but does not have management responsibility for them. The staff meet periodically with the associate director, when he visits the office. Inspectors agreed with one of the three strengths stated in the self-assessment report but considered the other two to be no more than normal practice. They agreed with two of the three weaknesses but identified other weaknesses. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good informal communications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of clarity in management arrangements
- ◆ inadequate policies and procedures
- ◆ no key skills training
- ◆ poor management of subcontractors
- ◆ failure to use management information in decision-making

26. All 3E's staff share one large office. The training staff share information on trainees' progress and their own activities on an informal basis. Staff are also kept informed of company developments through informal discussion. In addition, staff

meet with the associate director when he visits the centre. In the past, these meetings were held more regularly and staff were aware of when they would occur. More recently, the meetings have been held less frequently and at shorter notice. The meetings are not always minuted. Staff who cannot attend the meetings rely on colleagues for informal feedback on what has been discussed. The development manager and care-training colleagues also hold regular, informal meetings to discuss the care programme. These meetings are used effectively to discuss both the progress of individual trainees and standards across the programme. Staff are encouraged to take a full part in all meetings and to make their opinions known.

27. Management arrangements at 3E's are not clear. Job outlines were drawn up by the development manager some time ago, but the company has not formally adopted them. No staff member has a copy of a job description. The forthcoming changes proposed for 3E's mean that staff roles will change shortly. As a result, work on job descriptions and similar matters has been delayed until a new structure is in place. Staff roles and responsibilities are unclear. The development manager and the head of early years training both report directly to the associate director, who spends the major part of his time away from the training centre. When he is not on site, they contact him by telephone or make contact with one of the other directors at the city technology college. There is no organisation chart for 3E's. Staff go to the development manager with day-to-day problems. He helps to resolve many of them but does not have the authority to take major decisions. Although staff share information well on an informal basis there is no one to take responsibility for ensuring that essential action is carried out.

28. There is no staff handbook. 3E's does not have its own management and staffing policies. The policies and procedures of the city technology college do not refer to 3E's or to work-based training. A copy of the city technology college staff handbook is kept in the office but staff do not use it and do not have individual copies. A staff appraisal system was introduced in September 1999. Staff training needs were identified as part of the appraisal process but little training for staff has been provided in a systematic way. Some staff have been part-sponsored by 3E's to undertake training which they have asked for themselves. Some training is provided in response to fill identified gaps in the collective expertise of staff but is not planned in advance.

29. Key skills training has not been available to 3E's trainees for over six months. Previously a member of staff from the city technology college provided key skills training. When this individual left, 3E's had no contingency plan to cover this area of work. Trainees have, therefore, been delayed in their completion of the key skills element of their framework. One member of staff has now taken the key skills trainer award.

30. Training in management and professional and customer service is subcontracted to two different trainers. 3E's has a basic written agreement with the subcontractor, but this does not fully stipulate the training to be provided or how contract compliance and the quality of training will be monitored. Trainees on these programmes are visited in the workplace by the subcontractor. Trainees

regard the subcontractors as responsible for them rather than 3E's. Staff from 3E's do not visit the subcontractor to monitor the quality of the training provided or to seek feedback from trainees on their training experience.

31. Management information is collected to ensure compliance with the terms of the TEC contract. The development manager submits monthly reports to the associate director, but these are confined to an analysis of the financial implications of training for the company. The board of directors does not receive regular management information about training matters. Some monitoring activity has taken place recently, followed by action to increase recruitment from some groups under-represented on the training programmes. Apart from this, there has been little analysis of any data collected. There are no staff meetings and there is no forum where staff can receive management information or contribute to decisions about the future direction of the company's training activities.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

32. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the associate director. The organisation is committed to improving the quality of its training. The organisation meets the quality assurance standards of the TEC and external awarding bodies it uses. In 1998, the city technology college, of which 3E's is a subsidiary part, achieved the Investors in People award. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths, the majority of which represented no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with most of the weaknesses but found other weaknesses 3E's had not identified. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ some effective action to rectify weaknesses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ poor use of existing procedures
- ◆ no targets for improving the quality of training
- ◆ little sharing of best practice
- ◆ no systematic use of data in planning for continuous improvement

33. In 1998, 3E's carried out self-assessment for the first time. Through this, it identified some significant weaknesses. In 1999, 3E's evaluated the extent of its progress in rectifying these weaknesses and updated the action plan drawn up at the time of the original self-assessment. There has been an increase in the number

of trainees from minority ethnic groups and trainees with disabilities on programmes. There have been male applicants for the childcare programme which, hitherto, has attracted female trainees only. 3E's has reviewed the type and amount of support trainees on this programme need. A recent analysis of early leavers has led to an action plan being developed which aims to reduce the numbers of trainees leaving programmes before completion of work for their qualification.

34. Quality assurance policies and procedures were originally developed and put into operation early in 1997 by the parent organisation, the city technology college, but these did not refer to work-based trainees. There had been no updating or review of these policies and procedures until immediately prior to the inspection. Staffing resources are low and individual members of staff are not given specific responsibilities for aspects of quality assurance. Quality assurance procedures have been given a low priority by the organisation. Quality assurance arrangements rely on a mix of old policies and procedures, statements of fact or intent, policies with no procedures and procedures with no associated policy document. These do not cover all aspects of 3E's operations. There are no policies or procedures referring to the provision for New Deal clients, to internal verification or to the conduct and recording of progress reviews. There are procedures for only one vocational area of 3E's provision. There is no systematic monitoring, updating or evaluation of quality assurance.

35. There is no systematic use of quality assurance processes that do exist. There is a policy and procedure for internal quality audit but it focuses only on contract compliance. An annual audit of compliance with the TEC contract is carried out. No audits have taken place, however, of the quality of experience of work-based trainees or of the quality of training provided by employers, subcontractors or 3E's own staff. Staff have little understanding of quality assurance, have received no training in, or guidance on, quality assurance and do not carry out quality assurance work as a routine part of their work.

36. Staff are set specific targets which are linked to the company's financial goals. There are no specific targets for rectifying identified weaknesses. Action plans lack objectives, do not state who has responsibility for carrying actions out or give the timescales within which action must be completed. Staff do not hold meetings to monitor whether action to improve training is proving effective.

37. Although there are examples of some good practice within the organisation there are no procedures for staff to share this. For example, on the childcare programme, there is good practice in the way training and assessment, internal verification and trainees' progress reviews is carried out, but this is not shared with staff in other occupational areas.

38. Feedback is sought annually from employers. The feedback, however, does not relate to specific vocational areas to enable staff to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various programmes. Individual tutors and trainers use a variety of methods such as questionnaires and discussion to obtain information from trainees on the quality of the training programmes. Arrangements for obtaining feedback are not co-ordinated. The feedback is not summarised



systematically and little action is taken on it. Data on retention, achievement and destinations are not systematically monitored or analysed to evaluate performance across the organisation and no targets are set for improving the quality of training.