



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2000

**Kirkdale Industrial
Training Services
Limited**

SUMMARY

Kirkdale Industrial Training Services Limited offers good training in engineering trades, motor vehicle repair and maintenance, and in business administration. The training is well planned and by experienced and well-qualified trainers. Equal opportunities is effectively promoted to trainees at the start of their training, but there is little reinforcement during the training programmes. Trainees are well supported during their training and are encouraged to gain additional qualifications. Training is particularly well managed at the training centre and staff are well trained for their roles. Quality assurance arrangements are good, with effective systems for gaining feedback used to continuously improve training processes.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2
Business administration	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent training facilities
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ rapid achievement of occupational competence by trainees
- ◆ good personal support for trainees
- ◆ frequent opportunities for trainees to discuss progress
- ◆ strong links with employers and effective networking
- ◆ effective, inclusive self-assessment process

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no demanding targets set for trainees
- ◆ lack of reinforcement of equal opportunities issues during training
- ◆ lack of effective guidance and support for trainees leaving early
- ◆ no use of data to make improvements

INTRODUCTION

1. Kirkdale Industrial Training Services Limited (KITS) is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The company was formed by the merger in 1991 of two smaller group-training associations which were originally formed in 1967 to provide engineering training for small and medium-sized companies. It was supported by the Engineering Industry Training Board and member companies paid towards the cost of training and assessing engineering apprentices to industry standards. KITS has trainees in approximately 300 local companies and strong links with other organisations nationally. These companies are predominantly in the engineering sector and range in size from six to 1,000 employees. The chief executive reports to an executive committee consisting of representatives of local engineering and manufacturing companies. The company has 31 employees, including the chief executive.
2. KITS currently has contracts with Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Wakefield TEC for government-funded training programmes for young people. It offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships leading to at least national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 respectively and other work-based training programmes for young people leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 436 young people in training.
3. The main areas of occupational training offered are general engineering trades, motor vehicle engineering and business administration. The company's premises are in Brighouse in West Yorkshire and comprise training rooms, offices, a conference centre and workshops.
4. KITS subcontracts most of its vocational teaching in engineering and the teaching of specialist NVQs, such as pattern-making, foundry work and vehicle body assembly, to colleges of further education.
5. In September 2000, the unemployment rate in Calderdale and Kirklees was 3.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.4 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 4.6 per cent of the population in Calderdale and 10.7 per cent in Kirklees. Engineering industries provide 12 per cent of all employment in the area. Sixty-four per cent of 16 year olds stay on in education. Fifteen per cent of school leavers join government-funded training programmes for young people. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 39.8 per cent in Calderdale and Kirklees compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. KITS produced its first self-assessment report in October 1998 and has updated the report in April of each year since then. A revised report was prepared in May 2000 in preparation for inspection. All of the training centre's staff, as well as trainees and employers, were involved in compiling the report and they correctly identified many important strengths and weaknesses. The report was found to be an accurate reflection of the company's main strengths and weaknesses and was self-critical where necessary.

7. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at KITS during October 2000. They examined management files, data on trainees' achievement, trainees' personal files and portfolios of evidence. Sixty-four trainees were interviewed. Inspectors visited 35 work-placement providers and interviewed 34 employers' representatives. Twenty-seven interviews were conducted with members of KITS' staff. They observed eight trainees' assessments, eight training sessions and six progress reviews.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering	0	7	0	0	0	7
Business administration	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	8	0	0	0	8

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 2

8. KITS offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and other work-based training programmes in mechanical, electrical, fabrication and motor vehicle engineering. There are 375 general engineering trainees and 38 trainees in motor vehicle engineering. Trainees are recruited directly by employers or by KITS, which then finds them work placements. All motor vehicle trainees work towards NVQs, to level 2 or 3. Trainees spend four days each week at their workplaces and the other day at KITS or one of three subcontracted colleges gaining the additional skills and background knowledge for their NVQs. Qualified staff in KITS' motor vehicle training workshop provide off-the-job training. Engineering trainees undertake a period of off-the-job foundation engineering training at KITS' training centre, working towards NVQs at level 2. This can last 16 to 48 weeks, depending on employers' requirements. Employers may also ask for the training to be made up of blocks of shorter periods. This foundation engineering training provides trainees with basic engineering skills which act as a basis for higher-level courses. Engineering trainees then join their companies and start working towards NVQs at

level 3 or level 4 and further education courses if they are advanced modern apprentices. Of these, 96 per cent are employed when they start their level 3 or level 4 NVQ. KITS has a network of some 300 companies from across the engineering sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises as well as large companies. Training and assessment for the NVQ is carried out on the employers' premises. The employer provides the training and KITS employs qualified assessors or uses work-based assessors to carry out assessments. They visit trainees every four weeks to monitor and assess their progress and carry out full progress reviews on every third visit. Six of KITS' staff provide off-the-job engineering training and two provide motor vehicle training. Six full-time staff carry out assessments in the workplace for engineering trainees. There are 365 advanced and foundation modern apprentices in engineering and motor vehicle engineering, and 48 trainees on other work-based learning programmes. Further education qualifications are achieved by studying at one of the subcontracted colleges used by KITS. Advanced modern apprentices can enhance their specialist technical competence beyond level 3 or 4 NVQs, often through short courses at KITS. Inspectors agreed with the grading in the self-assessment report and with many of the strengths and weaknesses which KITS identified. Action plans have been drawn up to rectify the weaknesses, with target dates for their achievement.

GOOD PRACTICE

'F1 For Schools' is an innovative scheme linking employers, schools, training establishments and universities. KITS provides schools with three-dimensional (3D) design facilities to design a dragster-style racing car. Students transfer designs electronically to KITS, where a computer-controlled machine produces 3D models in balsa wood. The cutting process can be seen by students through a video-conferencing link. The models are then painted by the students and prepared for competitive races. The project enhances the information technology and problem-solving key skills of those involved and encourages young people to consider engineering careers.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rapid achievement of occupational competence by trainees
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ excellent support given by advisors to trainees and employers in the workplace
- ◆ excellent standard of trainees' portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress towards key skills achievement
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in motor vehicle engineering

9. General engineering trainees undertake an intensive and well-structured period of off-the-job training in KITS' workshops. The workshops, which are equipped to an exceptionally high standard, are clean, tidy and well maintained, with more than enough equipment for the number of trainees. The excellent training resources include modern spark erosion machines, computer-programmed lathes, milling machines and a plasma cutter, hydraulic and pneumatic process-control equipment, computer-aided design facilities and many other items of mechanical engineering, fabrication, welding and electrical equipment. During this phase of their training, trainees work towards NVQs at level 2 in areas such as electrical or mechanical engineering, fitting, sheet-metal working, drawing, computer-aided design or computer numerical control machining. The off-the-job training equips trainees with the necessary skills rapidly to become effective in the specialist work of their employer. A particular example was of a trainee quickly taking on computer-aided

design work at his workplace to complement the work he was carrying out on a cutting machine. Motor vehicle trainees attend off-the-job training one day each week in well-equipped motor vehicle workshops.

10. KITS has developed an effective network of work-placement providers. Employers offer many training opportunities. In smaller companies, trainees remain in their chosen specialisation, gradually taking on more responsibility. In larger companies, employers develop training plans with their trainees to enable them to move around the company, learning new skills which meet the employers' needs. Occupationally qualified training advisors from KITS ensure that this training also meets the needs of the trainees' NVQ programmes. Senior managers ensure that appropriate staff are available to carry out assessments or expert witness duties. All the employers give trainees adequate time for portfolio-building, assessments and progress-review meetings. It guarantees all trainees employment and has an effective system to match trainees to appropriate employers. It has good links with employers, as staff become aware of employers' particular work practices, staffing arrangements and levels of equipment as they match trainees to employers. When problems occur, KITS reacts quickly and takes effective action. There is a good, mature rapport between instructors and trainees. Many trainees have recommended KITS to younger members of their family or friends, some of whom are now training with KITS.

11. Trainees' portfolios are of an excellent standard. During the engineering foundation training, trainees develop a good understanding of how to produce a portfolio of evidence. They are guided effectively through the process of cross-referencing their evidence to the units of their NVQs. Trainees then take responsibility for gathering valid evidence from their workplaces, and for cross-referencing evidence to the level 3 or 4 NVQ units. The portfolios, which contain a significant amount of evidence from the workplace, are comprehensive, well presented, clearly referenced and of a high standard. They include several types of evidence, including witness testimonies, documentary evidence and work records. During visits to the workplace, the trainees' assessors provide further guidance on identifying evidence for the NVQ.

12. Achievement rates are good, with 38 per cent of foundation and advanced modern apprentices, and 49 per cent of other trainees having already completed the targets on their training plans. Although 34 per cent of each group leave early, many of these trainees gain individual NVQs and leave to take up employment. Instructors, training advisors and assessors are very experienced and well qualified in their occupational areas as well as in teaching, advising, assessing or validating as appropriate. Most of KITS' staff have been with the company for a long time and work well as a team.

13. Trainees are making slow progress towards gathering key skills evidence. Some are not clear about how best to integrate their learning experiences in college and the workplace. Some trainees have almost completed their modern apprenticeship but have only just started working on the key skills units.

14. On- and off-the-job training in motor vehicle engineering is poorly coordinated. Trainees and employers are not routinely given information about the subject matter to be covered during off-the-job training. Trainees have a list of dates when they are required to attend off-the-job training, but there is no information for trainees or employers about what will be taught on these dates. Employers are therefore unable to choose work for their trainees to complement the off-the-job training.

Business administration

Grade 2

15. There are 23 trainees in business administration, of whom six are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are advanced modern apprentices. There are 15 female and eight male trainees. The first trainees began in 1997. The training was subcontracted to other local training organisations until December 1998 when KITS became an accredited centre for NVQs in administration. One trainee recently transferred to a customer service modern apprenticeship, which KITS started to offer in September 2000. KITS gives most trainees a selection test and those who pass are then interviewed. The details of successful applicants are submitted to member companies, mainly in the engineering field, and other local organisations which have notified KITS of suitable vacancies. Occasionally, companies recruit potential trainees themselves and then refer them to join one of KITS' training programmes. These trainees do not undergo the selection test. All trainees are employed from the start. There is one part-time trainer/assessor who started in late March 2000. KITS' office supervisor is the internal verifier, as well as being the chief executive's personal assistant. Off-the-job training is provided by the trainer/assessor every Monday and Tuesday morning at KITS' training centre. The trainer/assessor visits the trainees regularly in their workplaces to observe and assess them, and carries out a progress review with trainees every six weeks, or more frequently if trainees do not attend the training centre for off-the-job training. Trainees are offered a range of qualifications such as computer literacy, text processing, business technology and an NVQ in customer service. These can be used to complete the requirements of their qualification framework or as additional qualifications. The training room has a suite of 15 networked computers. The room is also used for key skills training. KITS identified seven strengths in this area. Inspectors agreed with three of these strengths and considered two to be more relevant to other areas. They found two new strengths. KITS identified three weaknesses which inspectors did not agree with. Inspectors identified two additional weaknesses and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and well-recorded training and assessment
- ◆ frequent assessment opportunities
- ◆ flexible off-the-job training

- ◆ early integration of key skills into NVQs
- ◆ employment secured for all trainees from start of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective feedback from internal verification process
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

16. All aspects of the training programmes are well recorded. There are clear lesson plans for off-the-job training which are given to trainees and employers well in advance. The assessor allocates time each week to cover specific topics, NVQ portfolio-building and assessment. This helps those who are unable to attend every week to plan ahead to ensure that they cover their individual training requirements. Trainees' attendance is carefully monitored and KITS' staff follow up absences with trainees and employers. The assessor makes detailed notes of everything which is covered with each trainee every time they meet in the training centre and in the workplace. The trainees receive copies of these notes. Each trainee has a separate logbook in which the assessor records observations of the trainee at work and of any verbal questioning. The assessor maintains an overall record of each trainee to monitor her or her progress.

17. Trainees are assessed when they attend the training centre for portfolio-building workshops and when the assessor visits them at work. These visits are carefully recorded and action plans are drawn up each time. Most trainees are also working towards qualifications over and above those required in their qualification frameworks. All trainees are on schedule to achieve their targets. To date, one foundation modern apprentice has achieved an NVQ at level 2, and three of the six advanced modern apprentices have also achieved NVQs at level 2.

18. There is good flexibility in the off-the-job training. Trainees can choose the day and pattern of attendance to suit their employment. Most attend for half a day each week but some prefer to attend for a whole day every fortnight. Others attend on an individually agreed basis to cover their specific training needs. Trainees can also arrange to use facilities at KITS in the evenings or on other days of the week. There are good, up-to-date learning and resource materials for trainees to use. Three trainees cannot attend off-the-job training at all, two owing to distance and one because of commitments in the workplace. The assessor visits these trainees at least monthly at work, sometimes more often, as well as providing support by telephone and post between visits.

19. KITS is effective in teaching trainees how to gather evidence for key skills at the very beginning of their training. The trainees are assessed for key skills, against both the old and new standards, at the same time as working towards their administration NVQ. Wherever possible, the same evidence is used for both and is recorded systematically as the trainee progresses. However, KITS does not make any initial assessment of trainees' key skills. It has recently piloted an initial assessment of key skill with engineering trainees which it intends to administer to

all new and existing trainees. All trainees are now asked by the assessor to complete a checklist to identify possible sources of accreditation of prior learning and achievement such as appropriate GCSE results, hobbies and sports.

20. All trainees are employed from the start of their training. Since the programme started several trainees have been made redundant. KITS has been able to find them appropriate alternative employment through its network of contacts. For example, one trainee, whose job changed within the same company from trainee administrator to purchasing assistant, was having difficulty generating evidence for the administration NVQ. The assessor arranged for him to transfer to a customer service advanced modern apprenticeship last month.

21. Internal verification is carried out systematically in accordance with KITS' procedures. This includes sampling of portfolios, observations of assessment both on and off the job, and interviews with trainees. However, the internal verifier does not provide assessors with sufficient feedback to help them to improve the quality of portfolios. There is only one very recent example of any action points being made by the internal verifier. The assessor is making changes to the training and the way trainees are advised to build portfolios, but internal verification has not so far been used to help to develop good practice.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

22. KITS' chief executive is responsible for equal opportunities. The company has a detailed written equal opportunities policy, which complies with current legislation and the requirements of the TEC. The company's policy is reviewed annually, and amended where necessary. KITS collects information on the ethnicity, gender and any disabilities of all applicants for training. Equal opportunities is discussed during induction, when trainees are issued with a handbook containing the company's equal opportunities policy statement. In engineering, women are under-represented and trainees from minority ethnic groups are under-represented on all of the training programmes. KITS has good links with schools in the area, and has recently achieved an award from the TEC for promoting equality in employment. The training centre is accessible for people with disabilities. The self-assessment report correctly identified most of the strengths and weaknesses, but inspectors did not agree with one of the identified weaknesses, and identified another weakness. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ many good initiatives to promote training to under-represented groups
- ◆ good training for staff in equal opportunities issues

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of reinforcement of equal opportunities issues with trainees
- ◆ insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data

23. KITS makes good efforts to attract under-represented groups to its programmes. Women are targeted through a 'girls into engineering' day in which the training centre is opened up to girls who are considering engineering as a career and their parents. Both this year's and last year's 'apprentice of the year' in engineering have been women. KITS' staff promote this fact to the schools they regularly visit. A 'day in the life of an apprentice' session is held in which trainee careers advisors visit employers, learn about the programmes and spend a day on practical skills in the training centre.

24. There are also ongoing initiatives with external bodies to promote training to minority ethnic groups. KITS attends many careers events throughout the year, and joint jobs and training events with careers and the TECs. There are 'drop in' careers sessions held at various locations in the area, which are attended by both TEC and KITS representatives. There is a joint venture with community leaders in the area to raise the awareness of the courses available at KITS, and to improve participation. KITS also operates an initiative called 'Face to Face' which is targeted at schools with high numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

25. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues. Most staff have attended two full-day seminars designed to raise their awareness of equal opportunities issues. The seminars, which covered an appropriate range of issues, were conducted by consultants and held at KITS' premises. A further one-day awareness and development day is part of the current staff training programme. Equal opportunities is a regular agenda item at staff meetings, where staff share the knowledge they have gained through training and discuss any problems.

26. Equal opportunities is discussed with trainees at induction, but is not reinforced with them at any later stage. Most trainees remember the part of the induction which covered equal opportunities, but are not familiar with the detail. Some trainees have a poor awareness of equal opportunities issues in general. There are no references to equal opportunities at either the trainees' monthly progress meetings or their quarterly reviews. Employers' equal opportunities policies are not routinely monitored, and one employer was found to have no written policy statement. KITS was not aware of this.

27. Equal opportunities data are collected on a monitoring form, which is filled in by the trainees, in addition to the training application form. Information from this is fed into a database, but the data are not used effectively to produce accurate statistics, performance indicators or analyse trends. There is little use of local or national statistics against which to measure performance, and equal opportunities statistics are not routinely circulated to staff or used in management meetings. Recruitment data about staff and trainees are available, but no effort is made to

identify issues or to use the information to direct recruitment towards under-represented groups. Minority ethnic trainees account for 2.5 per cent of all trainees on programmes, compared with a local minority ethnic population of 4.6 per cent in Calderdale and 10.7 per cent in Kirklees. Participation rates of minority ethnic trainees vary across programmes. For example, when KITS provides seasonal process-manufacturing courses the proportion increases significantly.

Trainee support

Grade 2

28. Trainees are referred to KITS by local careers services, or apply directly. Careers officers work closely with KITS to help applicants to select a suitable training programme. KITS contacts local companies to establish their training requirements for the forthcoming year and this determines the number of trainees it recruits. All applicants undertake aptitude tests as the first stage in the selection process. These tests cover literacy and numeracy as well as occupationally related skills such as mechanical reasoning and problem solving. Applicants who are successful in these tests are invited for an interview, and this, together with their national record of achievement and school reports, is used to select trainees. Interviews with potential employers are arranged for business administration and motor vehicle trainees, and they are not offered a training place until they have secured employment. Interviews with potential employers or placement companies are arranged for engineering trainees, and all trainees who complete the foundation engineering training secure employment. Many local employers use KITS to recruit all of their trainees. Trainees receive an induction at the training centre. This covers their rights and responsibilities, health and safety, and the company's rules. They receive a further induction from their employer. Those attending the subcontracted colleges receive an induction there. Additional support needs are identified by the initial selection tests or by trainees themselves. In the self-assessment report, KITS correctly identified most of the strengths and weaknesses, but inspectors did not agree with a weakness relating to poor recording of reviews. One other weakness, relating to the lack of a systematic approach to accrediting prior learning, was identified during inspection, and inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent and effective progress reviews for trainees
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' successes
- ◆ good encouragement to achieve additional qualifications
- ◆ good personal support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of effective guidance and support for trainees who leave early
- ◆ no systematic approach for accrediting prior learning

29. KITS provides many good opportunities for trainees to discuss their progress. Instructors prepare a progress report with engineering trainees in the training centre at the end of each two-week period. After every six weeks, a more comprehensive review of progress is carried out and a copy of the report from this review is sent to parents, sponsoring companies and employers. Engineering trainees are visited monthly in their workplaces by training advisors and are encouraged to discuss their progress with their employer. A detailed examination of trainees' work is carried out, and in many cases they are also assessed. Trainees are set targets for work to be completed or evidence to be gathered before the next visit. Trainees are aware of their progress and understand the requirements of their programmes. Business administration trainees on day release have progress reviews every six weeks, and those who do not come into the training centre are reviewed at work every four weeks. Additional progress reviews are arranged for those who need them. Many employers are actively involved in the monthly meetings and quarterly reviews of progress. Employers often plan work to enable trainees to obtain NVQ evidence and they are aware of trainees' progress. KITS also has close links with subcontracted colleges, where regular and productive meetings are held. Individual training plans are updated regularly.

30. Trainees' successes are often publicly celebrated. The company holds three open evenings for parents or guardians throughout the year, two for potential trainees and one for existing trainees. There is also an awards and presentation evening held at a local football stadium. Trainees receive certificates for the qualifications that they have achieved, and there are awards for individual performances. Trainees' work is displayed and parents or guardians, trainees, employers and representatives from the TEC are invited.

31. All of KITS' trainees are encouraged to achieve additional qualifications. Trainees who have the ability are encouraged to do key skills at higher levels. In engineering, all craft trainees can take the highest craft award and technician trainees are encouraged to go on to do a higher national certificate after they have completed a national certificate. Any trainees can attend any of the practical courses run by KITS free of charge.

32. KITS has an effective system for supporting trainees, and trainees with occupational and welfare problems are well supported. Six trainees were made redundant by their companies last year and all were found new employment. One trainee who left to take up alternative employment was disappointed with his new job and returned to KITS. He was given a new place on the programme and found a new employer. At one company, a trainee was having difficulties with a supervisor. The trainee was offered the option of moving to a different employer, but the problems at work were remedied to everyone's satisfaction.

33. There is insufficient guidance and support given to those who leave the programmes early and KITS does not routinely monitor the reasons for trainees leaving training early. There is no procedure to ensure that trainees coming to the

end of their training are given up-to-date and objective advice on their future careers and qualification opportunities.

34. KITS does not take a systematic approach to accrediting trainees' prior learning and experience. School results are taken into account where applicable, but there is no systematic way of determining whether other learning or achievements may be relevant to trainees' training. In business administration, trainees are asked to identify possible sources of previous learning or achievements, but this good practice is not carried out in engineering.

Management of training

Grade 2

35. KITS has 80 member companies which pay an annual subscription to the organisation, and about 300 companies use its training services. An executive board of 12 representatives drawn from some of the member companies manages the company. The board meets on a quarterly basis to decide on business strategies and to monitor financial performance. The day-to-day operation of KITS is the responsibility of the chief executive. Off-the-job training and some NVQ assessment is provided by KITS' training instructors in the company's own training centre. Training advisors employed by KITS are responsible for monitoring and assessing trainees in the workplace. KITS employs nine training advisors, nine training instructors (three of whom are part time), three field officers, five administrators, a training centre manager, a chief executive, two cleaners and a housekeeper. Specialist training in vehicle body repair and foundry/pattern making is provided at subcontracted colleges. A local subcontracted technical college provides most of the engineering further education. An established administration team supports the whole training and assessment process. A copy of the business plan is issued to all staff annually, once company targets have been set. Staff meetings are held every three months, or sooner if needed. These meetings are used to update staff on relevant issues and share information. Assessors and their managers meet monthly to discuss training. Staff appraisals are carried out each year. There is an overall staff development plan and line managers are responsible for their own departments' training plans. There are written procedures for staff recruitment and an induction process. All staff have up-to-date job descriptions. KITS achieved the Investors in People Standard in September 1998 and was successfully re-accredited against the new standards in March 2000. In its self-assessment report, the company correctly identified two strengths and had corrected two identified weaknesses by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent off-the-job training resources
- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training

- ◆ effective system for staff development
- ◆ effective links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently demanding targets set for trainees' achievement

36. The company moved to new premises two years ago and has developed excellent training resources. The premises are modern, well maintained, spacious and tastefully decorated. Classrooms are equipped with modern training resources. Workshops have machinery and equipment which reflect the types used in modern engineering workshops. The workshops are well laid out with enough equipment for the number of trainees in the different work areas. Safety and cleanliness are given a high priority in KITS' programmes.

37. Off-the-job-training is well planned and professionally carried out. A good range of varied training takes place in the engineering workshops. The courses are planned efficiently to ensure that equipment and staff resources are used effectively, while still giving trainees the chance to choose their pattern of attendance. For example, trainees starting a programme later in the year than most others can still join existing programmes. They are able to cover the full coursework over the same period of time as the other trainees.

38. KITS has an effective staff development system. Following the publication of the company's business plan each year, managers conduct a performance appraisal with each of their staff. Following the appraisal, managers discuss the business objectives for their department and agree what contribution each individual can make to achieve the department's objectives. They then discuss the training which may be needed to help individual staff members to meet their own objectives. A company training plan, agreed with the chief executive, is drawn up. Training is prioritised to ensure that the most urgent business needs are met first. Department managers arrange the agreed training and appropriate reviews are carried out by the manager just before the training and just after it. KITS includes a development week in the assessors' schedules every 13 weeks. This gives assessors a good opportunity to concentrate on issues relevant to training, other than assessment.

39. KITS has built up strong links with employers and established effective lines of communication with other organisations. Employers are involved in the training process and have regular opportunities to influence the training provided by KITS. KITS has appropriate written agreements with all its subcontractors and employers. The large employer base KITS works with is useful if trainees need a new work placement to complete their qualifications when, for reasons such as redundancy, they become unemployed. Employers also send their skilled staff to KITS for multi-skills training or to update them on new technology. KITS has established a network of training organisations. Members of the network work together to find solutions to training issues which may be of common concern. The networking idea has spread beyond training organisations to schools, colleges and

public companies.

40. KITS does not set sufficiently demanding targets for all trainees. Trainees are often unclear as to when they can expect to achieve their qualifications. In engineering, the foundation training for the level 2 NVQ is demanding and closely monitored to ensure that trainees achieve the qualification in a structured way, but when trainees start working with an employer and begin their level 3 or 4 NVQ work, this structured approach does not continue. Some trainees are allowed to fall behind in their collection of NVQ evidence and workplace priorities often take precedence over NVQ work. The situation is similar in business administration and motor vehicle training, where the process of collecting evidence is not properly planned. Training advisors do set targets but these are often too broad. Trainees have to find large amounts of evidence in a short period of time, as the programme will not be funded beyond a known cut-off date.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

41. KITS has a quality assurance system comprising policies, procedures and work instructions. The procedures cover areas such as recruitment of staff and trainees, arrangements with subcontractors and assessment and support arrangements. The manager of the training centre has specific responsibility for quality assurance of work-based training. All staff are issued with copies of their relevant work instructions. All KITS' staff, as well as trainees and employers, were involved in the production of the self-assessment report, which has been used to make improvements. Internal audits of the company's procedures are carried out by trained staff. Local subcontracted colleges are audited on a six-monthly cycle. Comparisons are made with similar training organisations on a national basis and good practice is shared. Regular feedback is sought from trainees and employers through face-to-face reviews and a range of surveys. Action plans for improvement are drawn up and shared with the relevant staff. In its self-assessment report, KITS accurately identified strengths and one weakness relating to quality assurance. One other strength was identified and one of the weaknesses had been rectified before the inspection. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive quality assurance system used by all staff
- ◆ effective self-assessment and action-planning process
- ◆ good use of employers' and trainees' feedback to improve training
- ◆ effective use of comparison of performance with other training organisations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor use of management information data

42. KITS' quality assurance systems are comprehensive and well recorded. It has a plan detailing the procedures relevant to specific areas and which procedures are relevant to specific staff. All staff have a clear understanding of the quality assurance system and know where to find all the policies, procedures and working instructions. The management review team regularly reviews the quality assurance system and there is an effective mechanism for updating, amending and controlling quality assurance procedures.

43. KITS' self-assessment process is thorough and involves all parties involved in training. In preparation for inspection the training manager evaluated the self-assessment process, and staff in each occupational area evaluated their own work against the quality assurance statements in *Raising the Standard*. Employers and trainees were consulted on the process and had an opportunity to comment on the identified strengths and weaknesses of KITS. The training manager issued a draft report to all parties involved, collated their responses and compiled the final report. It is a comprehensive document and includes appropriate evidence to support the judgements which are made. Action plans to support the process have been produced and implemented as part of an ongoing cycle of improvement. The report is balanced and self-critical and includes many accurate strengths and weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses have already been rectified.

44. KITS gathers feedback from employers and trainees by means of surveys and questionnaires during, and at the end of, training programmes. Training advisors, who are in frequent contact with employers, also seek their views and opinions on training. The information is analysed and KITS uses the results effectively to improve the training programmes. Such improvements include introducing a flexible pattern of attendance for engineering foundation trainees, developing seminars for employers on key skills and NVQs. Trainees are also seconded to other employers or return to the training centre for specific training when they cannot gather adequate evidence for an NVQ unit in their workplace. Employers' and trainees' feedback forms an agenda item at the monthly and quarterly meetings of KITS' management and at management review meetings.

45. KITS measures its performance effectively against that of other training organisations. The chief executive of KITS has, with executives from six other comparable training centres within the national association of training groups, formed a working group to establish standards in each organisation. The group shares good practice and monitors initial assessment, trainees' reviews, qualified assessors' requirements, the content of training, further education contractual obligations and the collection of data. Comparisons are made between each member company's data. After analysis, targets are set for further improvement. Minutes of each meeting are taken, with action points. A pilot scheme is currently being developed in the collection of data by electronic means. Training advisors will be able to input data directly from employers' premises. Staff will also have access to all the data stored in the training centre. Information from the other organisation's training centres will also be available to each member company,



making it easier to share good practice.

46. KITS' internal verifiers follow written procedures satisfactorily in all the occupational areas. There are regular assessors and verifiers' meetings at which good practice is shared. The internal verification in motor vehicle engineering is subcontracted and is satisfactory.

47. The training manager has recently set up a computerised database of management information which covers information on recruitment of trainees, achievement and retention data, details on destinations and information on those who leave early. The system is not yet used to identify trends or to help in making management decisions. Accurate information is not readily available to all. There is no systematic approach to the collection of information on a regular basis.