



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 2000

# Teesside Training Enterprise

## SUMMARY

Teesside Training Enterprise provides satisfactory training in manufacturing. Off-the-job training is well organised but little account is taken of individuals' differing training needs. Industrial placements are very good. Promotion of equal opportunities is less than satisfactory. There is no routine analysis of data relating to equality of opportunity and no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Trainees receive a good induction and there is a strong personal development programme. Procedures relating to reviews of progress in the workplace, however, are not sufficiently developed. Management of training is less than satisfactory. On- and off-the-job training is not linked to NVQ requirements. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and effective but the self-assessment report is not sufficiently self-critical in its evaluation of training.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Manufacturing	3

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ very good industrial placements
- ◆ high retention rate on modern apprenticeship programme
- ◆ strong personal development programme for apprentices
- ◆ comprehensive induction for trainees
- ◆ strong partnership with industry
- ◆ comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ extensive evaluation of courses and programmes

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to match on-the-job training to NVQ requirements
- ◆ lack of attention to equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities data
- ◆ underdeveloped process for reviewing trainees' progress in the workplace
- ◆ no account taken of initial assessment in constructing individual training plans
- ◆ inadequate oversight of on-the-job training by the training provider

## INTRODUCTION

1. Teesside Training Enterprise (TTE) is an independent training organisation, which markets its training under the name of TTE Management & Technical Training. It is a registered charity, with two centres in Teesside and one in Scotland. The organisation was established in 1990 by ICI and British Steel, primarily to provide engineering apprenticeships. It became independent in 1999. TTE has contracts with the Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide training in chemical processing for modern apprentices and adults on work-based learning programmes. After remaining constant since 1996, the number of trainees specified in the contract with the TEC has risen by 40 per cent for the year 2000-01. TTE has a franchise from Redcar and Cleveland College to provide engineering apprenticeships. It also provides chemical process and management training on a commercial basis to local industry. The organisation employs 105 staff, of whom 32 are part-time temporary staff. There are 500 engineering apprentices, 44 chemical process apprentices and 18 adult trainees. All off-the-job training is carried out by TTE in its own workshops and classrooms. On-the-job training is carried out in local chemical processing companies. Chemical process training is managed from TTE's Wilton site in Teesside, where 15 members of staff are directly involved in modern apprenticeship training and work-based training for adults.

2. The 1991 census found that 1.9 per cent of the population of Cleveland, and 4.4 per cent of the population of Middlesbrough, are from minority ethnic groups. In July 2000, the unemployment rate was 9.6 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland, and 9.0 per cent in Middlesbrough, compared with a national average of 3.5 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44.6 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland, and 31 per cent in Middlesbrough, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The business manager produced a self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection, with support from other staff. The self-assessment report contained some effective analysis and evaluation, and inspectors endorsed some of its conclusions. However, the weaknesses identified were not explained and some weaknesses were missed.

4. The inspection did not include the training of 500 engineering apprentices at the Southbank site. This is funded through a franchise from Redcar and Cleveland College, and was inspected by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in February 2000.

5. Three inspectors spent a total of 12 days with the organisation in September 2000. They visited eight work-placement providers, interviewed 28 trainees and 12 workplace supervisors and had 23 meetings with TTE's staff. They examined trainees' portfolios, training and assessment records, internal and external verifiers' reports and the TEC's documents relating to the organisation. They also observed two training sessions, two assessments and one progress review.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Manufacturing		1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Manufacturing

### Grade 3

6. TTE has 44 modern apprentices and 18 adult trainees receiving training in chemical processing. Work-based learning for adults is an in-house, 20-week programme, which leads to an academic qualification in process plant operations, and an NVQ at level 2 in process operations. All assessments are carried out on TTE's own pilot plant. The adult trainees attend job-search sessions at the start and the end of the programme. They do not have industrial placements.

7. The modern apprenticeship programme is designed to run over three years. Trainees are employed by TTE and sponsored by a local company. There are currently 16 sponsoring companies. From September, when the training begins, to December, trainees are based at TTE's Wilton site working towards a level 1 academic qualification in process plant operation. After three months with their sponsor gaining plant experience, they attend TTE's workshops for training in basic engineering before returning again to their sponsor to carry out a project, identifying valves and pumps on the plant-site. In the second year, trainees work

on the sponsoring company's premises and in TTE's workshops. They follow an open-learning programme for a level 2 academic qualification in process plant operations and start to work towards their NVQ at level 2. Trainees spend most of the third year with their sponsoring company, but attend TTE for further theoretical study. Staff have relevant and up-to-date experience in the chemical industries and most hold appropriate assessors or verifiers' qualifications. Some new staff are working towards their assessors' awards.

8. The organisation identified 17 strengths and six weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths, found some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice, and did not agree with others. They agreed with many of the weaknesses and found an additional strength. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ very good industrial placements
- ◆ good progression to employment
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to acquire additional skills and qualifications
- ◆ high retention rates for modern apprentices

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ over-prescriptive off-the-job training
- ◆ inadequate access to equipment off the job
- ◆ failure to match on-the-job training to NVQ requirements
- ◆ delay in beginning training and assessment for NVQ level 3

9. All trainees are placed with sponsors which are national or international chemical companies. TTE's Wilton site is in the middle of a large industrial complex so that trainees are exposed to real plant equipment from the day they start their training. In their placements, trainees carry out plant operation tasks and develop their skills as the programme progresses. Sponsors are keen to develop their trainees' potential. As trainees gain experience, they take on responsibility for supervising new trainees, writing plant operational procedures and leading teams on site in special projects to improve the efficiency of the plant.

10. Trainees have good opportunities to gain employment with their sponsors. In many instances, sponsoring companies employ their apprentices during the third year of training. The sponsorship agreement with TTE includes a statement of intent to employ the apprentice. Of the 11 trainees who started the programme in 1996, 10 got jobs with their sponsors, and of the 23 who started in 1997, 16 have obtained jobs.

11. The retention rate for the modern apprenticeship programme is 78 per cent, which is high. Of the 63 trainees starting training during the past four years, 14

have left early. However, all 14 had gained some qualifications and six of them had achieved an NVQ at level 2 in process operations. On the work-based learning for adults programme, the retention rate is lower. Early leaving rates have ranged from 39 per cent to 46 per cent over the past three years. In 1997-98, 32 per cent of adults on the work-based learning programmes gained employment in the industry.

12. TTE gives all trainees the opportunity to learn and develop additional skills and knowledge. Trainees have attended courses concerned with basic management skills, presentation skills, teamwork, level 1 computing and report writing. Sponsors are also investing in their trainees by sending them on specific operational courses, such as quality auditing, fluid mechanics and instrumentation. Sponsors are pleased with the competences and skills of TTE's trainees, and plan to train some of them for leadership roles.

13. Off-the-job training for modern apprentices is too prescriptive. It is planned ahead for the three years, with subjects and tasks outlined for each week. The programme cannot be altered or adapted to take account of trainees' individual needs. Trainees work at the same pace, irrespective of their abilities. For instance, in the second year, trainees study for process plant operations part 2 through open learning packages and at the end of each module hand in a tutor-marked assignment. However, those who complete the assignment ahead of the others are not encouraged, or given the opportunity, to move on to other modules. Trainees with a pass in general certificate of education (GCE) advanced level chemistry have had to follow the same units at the same pace as other trainees, and trainees with a pass in GCE advanced level computer science have been required to attend basic computing classes. The problem has been recognised by the TTE, which plans a more flexible approach for this year's intake.

14. Trainees cannot always have access to the plant equipment at TTE when they need it. The workshop has one batch rig and one filtration laboratory equipped with one distillation, one titration and one heat exchanger unit. One modern apprentice year group was unable to use the batch rig at a time for which they had booked it, because priority was given to the work-based learning for adults group. This delayed their assessments and achievement of level 2 NVQ. The practical work and assessments are now being planned so that modern apprentices and adult trainees' needs to use equipment do not clash. However, TTE has no contingency planning to cover the batch rig being out of use, or the failure of units in the filtration laboratory.

15. At level 2, all the training and assessment takes place on TTE's pilot plant. Trainees' workplace tasks are not matched to requirements of the NVQ. Similarly, at level 3, there has been no attempt to relate on-the-job training plans to the NVQ's requirements. Since April 2000, TTE's staff have started to visit sponsors' plant sites to ensure that the plant the trainees are working on will give them the range of experience necessary to meet the requirements of the level 3 NVQ. Information from these visits has not yet been shared with trainees, trainees' mentors or workplace supervisors.

16. There is currently a delay for trainees progressing from level 2 to level 3. Some trainees have waited up to six months after achieving their level 2 NVQ before receiving their level 3 standards. Trainees who started training in 1996 did not start to be assessed for their level 3 NVQ until April 2000, and only two have achieved an NVQ at level 3. Similarly, trainees who began training in 1997 started to be assessed in May 2000. Some of this group have not been visited at all, and some have not been told which units they should be working on. Some trainees do not know how they will be assessed, on what plant operation tasks they will be assessed, when they will be assessed or who will assess them.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 4

17. TTE has an equal opportunities policy which focuses on compliance with legislation. It also has a complaints procedure and written policies on bullying and harassment. Equal opportunities data on trainees are collected but are not analysed routinely. TTE does not monitor equal opportunities in the workplace. Four per cent of modern apprentices and 9 per cent of adult trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Four per cent of modern apprentices and none of the adult trainees are female. Two per cent of modern apprentices and none of the adult trainees are registered disabled. One of the organisation's trainers is a woman and one is registered disabled. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and two of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found further weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective liaison with local schools
- ◆ strong commitment to equality of opportunity in marketing training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of attention to equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities data
- ◆ lack of awareness among trainees of the complaints procedure

18. TTE recognises the importance of, and is committed to, equality of opportunity. However, it views equal opportunities mainly in terms of compliance with legislation. Detailed written procedures for the recruitment of trainees and the recruitment and development of staff take account of the relevant legislation and emphasise the need for non-discriminatory practices.

19. TTE has worked closely with schools and the wider community to promote its training programmes in engineering and chemical processing. Staff attend careers

events and give presentations in schools. Particular efforts are made to encourage women to apply for training. TTE is involved in awareness programmes about the chemical processing industry for young people in schools. It has also hosted events such as 'women into engineering' promotions. Recently the organisation has developed material for newspaper articles encouraging female applicants. It has produced new recruitment literature with positive images of women in the chemical processing industry. Recently there have been more applications from women. TTE operates a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) engineering course for year 10 pupils at its centre at Southbank, and this has been successful in attracting a good range of applicants. Places on the modern apprenticeship programme have now been opened up to pupils transferring from this course.

20. The recruitment and selection process for apprentices is rigorous and fair. Standard procedures are followed. Trainees' induction covers equal opportunities but the trainees do not remember what was covered and the organisation provides no follow-up. TTE is in the process of introducing a comprehensive pack and a video on equal opportunities.

21. TTE has recently completed a self-assessment for a national equality award. The self-assessment is self-critical and realistic about the organisation's present position on equal opportunities. The training centre at Wilton is accessible to people with restricted mobility.

22. The contract between TTE and the sponsors requires that trainees are treated in the same way as the sponsors' own employees. However TTE does not ask to see employers' equal opportunities policies. TTE does not monitor equal opportunities in the workplace and has taken no specific action to raise awareness or understanding of equal opportunities by sponsoring companies' staff. Some workplace supervisors had a poor understanding of equal opportunities issues.

23. Trainees' records are efficiently kept, and there is a great deal of data on trainees. However, the organisation does not analyse its data or monitor the achievements of trainees by gender, ethnicity or disability.

24. TTE has a complaints procedure. It is mentioned at induction, but trainees are not generally aware of it and do not know how to make a complaint. Trainees show a similar lack of awareness of the organisation's policies on bullying and harassment. TTE intends in future to issue written copies of its policies to trainees during induction.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 3**

25. Advertisements for apprenticeships are placed in local newspapers and respondents receive an application form and brochure. Potential trainees who meet the initial selection criteria of three GCSEs at grade C or above in English, mathematics and a science are invited to take an aptitude test. Those who pass the



test are interviewed by TTE's staff and by staff from the sponsoring company or companies to which they are referred. If the sponsoring company decides to offer a place to the applicant, TTE writes to the applicant offering an apprenticeship. Some applicants are offered places by more than one sponsoring company and the applicant makes the final choice. All trainees start at the same time. They first attend an induction and a five-day residential team-building course at TTE. When they begin their on-the-job training they also receive an induction from the sponsoring company.

26. TTE's induction programme includes some informal assessment of trainees' numeracy and literacy and a more formal initial assessment of their occupational knowledge. There is no initial assessment of key skills. Trainees' progress is reviewed on and off the job. Some on-the-job reviews are conducted by TTE's staff, and some by workplace supervisors. Trainees are encouraged to talk to the team leader or any other member of staff if they have problems. Responsibility for trainee support is not clear and no member of staff is qualified in counselling.

27. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths, disagreed with others and found some to be no more than normal practice. Two of the weaknesses had been rectified by the time of inspection. However, inspectors found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ strong personal development programme for apprentices
- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ well-used open access to computers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ underdeveloped procedures for progress reviews in the workplace
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ failure to reflect initial assessment and prior achievement in training plans

28. All trainees starting with TTE receive a comprehensive induction programme. It includes information on the structure of the programme, attendance requirements, health and safety and trainees' responsibilities. Details of the induction programmes and the administrative arrangements are clearly recorded. The apprentices' induction programme lasts five days and when they begin their on-the-job training they receive a further induction from their sponsor. All the apprentices interviewed by inspectors had received an appropriate induction at their workplace. However, TTE has no record of what is covered in the on-the-job induction, issues no guidance to the sponsoring companies, and does not monitor what actually occurs. Adult trainees receive a shorter induction, which is relevant to the programme they are following.

**POOR PRACTICE**

*During one progress review observed by inspectors, the trainee complained about one of the tutors. The member of staff carrying out the review did not record the trainee's concerns and countered the complaint with his own opinion of the tutor.*

29. The five-day residential course at the start of their programme is valued by trainees and provides a good opportunity for them to develop personal skills and teamwork. Other opportunities for trainees to extend their experience include a voluntary exchange visit to a process company in Germany during which they work alongside their German counterparts. Trainees are also involved in TTE's promotional work, visiting schools and attending careers events, which gives them a further chance to develop their personal skills.

30. All trainees have open access to computers at the training centre. They value the facilities and make effective use of them to produce logbook entries, generate graphs and tabulate results from laboratory work. All trainees receive training in using computers.

31. During off-the-job training, trainees' progress is reviewed at the end of each module of training. Outcomes are recorded as written statements or as entries on a performance appraisal form. In most, but not all, cases, the recorded outcomes are the result of discussion between the tutor and the trainee. For on-the-job training the progress-review process is less clear. In some cases the performance appraisal form is sent to the workplace supervisor to complete and send back to the training centre. In other cases, the form is taken to the workplace by training staff and discussed with trainees and supervisors. Some workplace supervisors do not receive copies of progress-review records and many trainees do not have copies. Most trainees are not clear about the progress-review process on the job. It is not sufficiently focused on helping them understand the progress they are making towards their NVQs or on providing guidance on what they need to do. The frequency of progress reviews varies. Some trainees have not had a workplace review for periods of up to six months. Others have had monthly progress reviews. In the last five months, a more thorough progress-review and target-setting process has been used with third- and fourth-year apprentices and this has helped them make more progress towards their level 3 NVQ.

32. The aptitude test for applicants covers mathematics and English and some occupational knowledge. The test is primarily a recruitment tool, although the results are available for reference when trainees start their programme. Trainees receive no feedback on their performance in the aptitude test. The results of the test are recorded on the trainee's individual training plan but these are not used to identify or plan additional training, and do not affect the individual's programme. Some additional assessment in numeracy and literacy takes place informally during induction, when written work is used to identify trainees experiencing difficulties. The assessments are informal and outcomes are not recorded. During induction trainees sit a further test covering occupational knowledge. The occupational test covers chemistry and calculation and the results are used to establish a common starting point for all members of the group. Those who do well do not have the opportunity to progress at a faster rate. There is no initial assessment of key skills. All trainees attend a two-week computer literacy course, including a few who are already computer literate or hold advanced level qualifications in computer science. TTE takes no account of initial assessment or prior achievement in planning training for individuals. Some trainees receive

additional literacy or numeracy training if the need for this is identified in the work produced or if individual tutors recommend the additional work. Additional support is not systematic and is not recorded.

## Management of training

## Grade 4

33. TTE is a registered charity which aims to advance education and training. The managing director reports to a board of non-executive directors representing the industrial sector. The organisation employs 105 staff, of whom 32 are part time. The chemical technician modern apprenticeship programme and the work-based learning for adults chemical processing programme are managed from the Wilton site. A team of 15 trainers and assessors report to the senior trainer, who is responsible for internal verification. The senior trainer reports to the team leader, for process and safety, who is responsible for the training programmes. The team leader in turn reports to the operations manager for the site, who reports to the managing director through the business development manager. A quality co-ordinator reports directly to the managing director. Of the 15 trainers and assessors, five are full time. A process and safety team provides training and assessment for the modern apprenticeship programme, work-based learning for adults and commercial programmes. Commercial training is the largest part of its work, comprising 68 per cent of NVQ assessments.

34. The process and safety team provides off-the-job training at the Wilton site and conducts progress reviews and assessments at the site and in the workplace. One member of the team plans and monitors trainees' progress off the job. Individual staff carry out commercial work at employers' premises, and assess and review the apprentices on those sites.

35. The senior management team produced a five-year business plan in 1999 and updated it in 2000. A summary is provided to all staff. The organisation stages an annual staff conference at which board members have the opportunity to speak to staff and staff are encouraged to debate the organisation's strategic plans. The number of trainees recruited each year is determined by the manpower requirements of the local chemical processing industry. TTE achieved Investor in People status in 1996 and has retained this.

36. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and one weakness. Inspectors found many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. They found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good induction for new staff
- ◆ strong partnerships with industry

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate oversight of on-the-job training
- ◆ lack of understanding of their role among workplace supervisors and mentors
- ◆ lack of clarity over staff responsibilities and accountability

37. TTE provides a good induction programme for new staff, which helps them quickly to become effective members of the organisation. During their first week, new staff are supported by an existing member of staff who will, for example, take them to lunch and ensure that they know where everything is. Each newcomer is provided with an induction booklet, which contains specific tasks to be carried out during their first two weeks. To complete their programme satisfactorily they have to arrange to see all key staff, to find out what they do and to collect certain information. New staff value the process.

38. TTE was formed by local industry and has maintained partnerships with local processing companies. The close relationships with the industry are a fundamental feature of TTE. The managing director is chairman of the TEC's chemical employers' advisory group. The chemical technician modern apprenticeship and the chemical foundation programme for adults are products of the organisation's work with industry. Recruitment of apprentices is based on the manpower planning of partner companies. The organisation's training centre is in the heart of a complex of chemical processing companies and many staff are former employees of these companies. Each apprentice is sponsored by a local company and TTE has a contract with each company setting out this relationship. The organisation holds an annual conference for sponsoring companies.

39. TTE's contracts with sponsoring companies do not place require the sponsor to provide training appropriate to the modern apprenticeship framework or the NVQ. The training undertaken on the job is controlled and managed by the sponsoring company. Some sponsoring companies provide comprehensive and effective in-company training programmes, but others provide very little. TTE does not accept responsibility for ensuring that apprentices have a clear and structured plan of training or that the training is appropriate to the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship framework. The organisation does ensure that the job the apprentice is training for is appropriate to the requirements of the level 3 NVQ. It does make some attempt to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. For example, during the initial periods of on-the-job training, apprentices are provided with assignments to find out about aspect of the sponsors' equipment and operations to help prepare them for future off-the-job training modules. However little is done systematically to ensure that training on the job is building on the knowledge and skills trainees develop during off-the-job training.

40. At their sponsoring companies, apprentices work with a mentor, who is usually a shift or team leader. Additionally, each sponsor has a training co-ordinator, usually the training manager or officer, who has overall responsibility for trainees. Some mentors and supervisors do not understand the roles they are expected to fulfil in training, and providing experience for, trainees. They have not been

briefed in training and have little knowledge of the requirements of the NVQ and the training framework. They are not therefore able to advise and direct trainees in the most productive ways. The organisation has called a meeting of sponsors, a few weeks after the inspection, to discuss briefings for mentors and supervisors.

41. TTE's staff are not always clear about responsibilities and accountability within the organisation, such as who has responsibility for maintaining the data on trainees' progress. Different staff monitor different aspects of the programme and no one is sure how the progress of individual trainees across the whole programme is being monitored. Different people were suggested as being responsible for the same activity and members of staff believe that other members of staff are holding information when, in fact, they are not. Different TTE staff may review an apprentice at different times and information is not always shared. Although TTE keeps a record of all visits to trainees, extracting the information relating to a particular trainee is not easy. Many issues are not followed up effectively, because of the lack of clarity over staff responsibilities and ineffective communication between staff.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 2

42. TTE's quality management system is built around ISO9001, a national quality standard, which it achieved in 1992. The system consists of a policy and procedures manual, and internal and external auditing. Arrangements are overseen by a quality management system group, comprising all managers and team leaders, and chaired by the managing director. There is also a full-time quality co-ordinator. TTE's emphasis on quality assurance mirrors that found in the local processing industry. There is a commitment to continuous improvement as well as compliance with contracts. TTE is an approved centre for NVQ awards in process operations at levels 2 and 3, laboratory operations at level 2 and engineering maintenance at level 2. Inspectors agreed with three of the four strengths recorded in the self-assessment report and identified two more. They did not agree with the weaknesses recorded in the self-assessment report but identified two other weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ strong commitment to continuous improvement by managers and staff
- ◆ extensive evaluation of courses and programmes
- ◆ self-critical nature of the organisation
- ◆ high standards of performance

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal procedures for monitoring sponsors' compliance with contracts
- ◆ insufficiently critical self-assessment report

43. The quality assurance manual contains procedures covering all the key areas of training, including recruitment, design, teaching and work placements. The procedures define what must be done and to what standard. Procedures are audited in accordance with a detailed schedule. Auditors report using a format which includes specific questions designed to check key actions and standards in relation to each procedure. Off-the-job training is observed and reported upon. Observation does not extend to training in the workplace.

44. The quality management system group oversees the whole approach to quality. Quality assurance matters are extensively discussed at senior managers' operational meetings and at team progress meetings. Quality assurance is also a key item on the agenda for meetings of a wide range of other groups. The minutes of these show clear evidence of continuous improvements, and the involvement of staff is evident. Staff throughout the organisation are committed to continuous improvement.

45. At the end of each component of training a questionnaire is administered to trainees and staff and managers use the responses to this, together with the data on trainees' achievements, to improve the next course. Staff discuss individual trainees' progress in off-the-job training daily and charts plotting their progress are displayed on office walls. The first group of trainees to finish their modern apprenticeship programme has recently responded to a questionnaire on their overall experience of training. The questions are well focused and trainees' answers to them contain useful information. Staff are drawing up an action plan based on an analysis of the responses.

46. By summer 2000, TTE's commercial contracts had produced such a large number of trainees that the organisation did not have enough assessors and internal verifiers to meet demands. The matter was raised at all levels of the organisation as a quality assurance issue. As a result, more resources were made available, new staff and consultants were recruited who have been, or are being, trained, and existing assessors and verifiers were asked to give priority to the groups of trainees furthest along in their programmes. There have been delays in assessment and verification for some groups of trainees, but the solutions arrived at through the organisation's quality assurance arrangements have succeeded in maintaining standards in a situation where they could have been compromised.

47. TTE's contracts with sponsoring companies focus more on financial arrangements than training requirements. The contracts outline what TTE will provide and place a strong emphasis on the sponsor's willingness to employ the apprentice at the end of the programme. However, there is nothing on the monitoring of training in the workplace and no procedure exists for monitoring



sponsors' compliance with the contract. Staff often appear uncomfortable at the idea of placing demands on sponsors.

48. The self-assessment report contains some useful analysis and evaluation. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report. However a number of weaknesses were overlooked and the weaknesses identified were not explained. The report fails to reflect the highly self-critical approach to be found in other aspects of TTE's quality-assurance activity.