



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 1999

REINSPECTION SEPTEMBER 2000

## Barnfield Training Services

## SUMMARY

Barnfield Training Services provides good off-the-job training in all occupational areas. Trainers are highly qualified and experienced and use their expertise to motivate trainees. Trainees benefit from being employed in good workplaces with ample opportunities to develop their skills. Assessment practices vary in quality across the occupational areas and, for some trainees, assessment lacks continuity. At the first inspection, hairdressing training was unsatisfactory. There was no work-based assessment, infrequent assessment for some trainees during off-the-job training and unsatisfactory recording of assessment decisions. Barnfield Training Services has made considerable progress in this area since then and many of the weaknesses have now been remedied. Hairdressing is now satisfactory. Equal opportunities practices are good. Pastoral support is comprehensive. Liaison officers visit trainees regularly, and support them effectively. The training unit responsible for government-funded training is well managed. All new staff are being supported with a specifically designed induction course. Although the college has produced good practice guidelines on internal verification, these are not always followed and practice varies across occupational areas. In most areas, internal verification is inadequate.

**As a result of the reinspection of Barnfield Training Services, the original published report text for hair and beauty has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspections findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2
Business administration	3
Hair & beauty	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair & beauty	3

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good working environments
- ◆ high levels of pastoral and practical support for trainees
- ◆ comprehensive staff development and induction
- ◆ regular monitoring of off-the-job teaching and learning practice



### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of systematic initial assessment and accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ weak internal verification

## INTRODUCTION

1. Barnfield College is the largest college of further education in Bedfordshire. In 1996-97, the college had 2,400 full-time and 17,754 part-time students studying for a range of academic and vocational qualifications. The college recruits students for its full- and part-time education and training courses from the Luton and Dunstable conurbations and the nearby rural areas of south Bedfordshire and north Hertfordshire. The college has four main sites in Luton. Each site offers training in different occupational areas and is managed by a site principal. College facilities include four hairdressing salons and beauty therapy facilities, five engineering workshops, computer rooms, information technology facilities and libraries.

2. The college's main source of funding is the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). However, it also generates income through contracts with Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and Luton training and enterprise councils (TECs). The college is structured into 17 programme areas and has seven business support units. The college has set up a separate unit, Barnfield Training Services (BTS) to manage all TEC-funded training. The unit is managed by a business support manager and employs one senior and four liaison officers, one engineering assessor, two administrators and one modern apprentice. The unit reports to the vice-principal responsible for human resources and the curriculum.

3. The college offers training in a range of occupational areas, including construction, engineering, business administration, hairdressing, and health, care and public services. Trainees are modern apprentices or national trainees and work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. Trainees are all employed and receive their off-the-job training at the college. Although trainees can join the programmes throughout the year, most are recruited over the summer and start off-the-job training in September. At the time of the first inspection in May 1999, there were 228 young people on government-funded training. There were a similar number in training at the time of the reinspection in September 2000. The college has good links with the careers service and schools in the area. A partnership arrangement with other colleges has resulted in a successful bid for government funds to develop the facilities to deliver key skills.

4. At the time of the first inspection in May 1999, the unemployment rates in Luton and Bedfordshire were 4.9 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively, lower than the national average at the time of 5.2 per cent. By the time of the reinspection in September 2000, unemployment in Luton had fallen to 3.8 per cent, while the rate across Bedfordshire as a whole had fallen to 2.2 per cent, and that for England was down to 3.4 per cent. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 35 per cent in Luton and 46.6 per cent across Bedfordshire, compared with a national average of 46.3 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers



achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above had improved slightly in Luton and was 35.8 per cent, compared with a national average of 46.9 per cent. Minority ethnic groups constitute 10 per cent of the total population in Bedfordshire.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Before the first inspection in 1999, two members of BTS attended two workshops on self-assessment provided by Bedfordshire and Luton and Hertfordshire TECs. BTS's manager produced the self-assessment report in consultation with the unit's administrators and trainers. All staff attended a planning day and produced draft reports for their own occupational areas. A second staff development day focused on refining the draft report. A team of staff from different areas worked together to produce the sections of the report on the generic aspects of training. An action plan was drawn up to address the weaknesses identified by the process. After inspection, BTS produced an action plan in readiness for reinspection. BTS produced a revised self-assessment report for hairdressing in June 2000. This report clearly identified the changes which had been made to remedy the weaknesses identified at the first inspection. The report also included a revised action plan.

6. During the first inspection in May 1999, a team of four inspectors spent 16 days at BTS. Inspectors examined BTS's records, awarding bodies' documents, trainees' work, portfolios of evidence and files, TEC contracts and audit reports. They met staff, employers and trainees, visited 22 workplaces, and interviewed 57 trainees, 15 workplace supervisors and employers, and 23 members of staff. Inspectors observed four off-the-job training sessions. They awarded two sessions a grade 1 and the other two sessions a grade 2.

7. Reinspection was carried out by two inspectors, who spent a total of four days at BTS during September 2000. They interviewed 19 trainees, five work-based assessors and seven salon owners and visited nine salons. Inspectors also observed three training sessions in hairdressing. Two sessions were awarded a grade 2 and one session was awarded a grade 3. Inspectors examined trainees' work and files, internal verification records and other documents held by BTS.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 2

8. There are 91 trainees studying for engineering qualifications, of which 90 are on modern apprenticeship programmes and one is a national trainee. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 and Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) national certificates. Fifty-nine trainees are working towards level 2 qualifications and 15 have completed level 2 and are working towards level 3 in engineering and programmes for machinists and toolmakers. Seventeen trainees are working towards motor vehicle qualifications including body repair, body fitting and parts distribution. All trainees are employed. Engineering apprentices attend college full time for the first year of their training programme to complete the NVQ level 2 engineering foundation programme. Trainees taking motor

vehicle level 2 and level 3 awards attend college one day a week for training and assessment. Trainees are employed in a range of companies including public service companies, automotive repair and body workshops, national car sales and distribution businesses and engineering companies. In 1997-98, 57 trainees began training. One trainee has completed, 13 have partially completed and 12 have left with no qualifications, 43 per cent are still in training. In 1998-99, 32 trainees started, two have left the programme early and 30 are still in training. Trainees gather evidence at work for assessment and receive regular visits from their BTS liaison officer to monitor progress. Assessors and trainers are appropriately qualified and also have assessor awards. With the exception of mechanical engineering at level 3, there is a clear and continuous internal verification system.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high standard of off-the-job training
- ◆ extensive off-the-job resources
- ◆ comprehensive foundation training programme
- ◆ high quality workplaces
- ◆ trainees produce good work in portfolios

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak assessment practices in mechanical engineering
- ◆ unplanned training at work

9. Off-the-job training is well structured, effectively planned and well delivered. Trainers use their experience, expertise and understanding of what motivates young trainees to enhance training sessions. Training is tailored to meet trainees' individual needs and trainees develop their knowledge and practical skills at an appropriate pace. The NVQ level 2 foundation programme suitably prepares trainees with the basic skills needed before continuing their apprenticeship in the workplace and progressing to level 3. The foundation programme combines a range of activities, moving trainees on to new projects as they progress. This enables trainees to see how their skills are improving. Trainees use a range of equipment and progress from simple to more complex tasks and computer-aided machinery. Trainees make a range of tools, which they can use later at work. The motor-vehicle training is project-based and trainees benefit from the range and selection of motor vehicles available to practice their skills. Workshops are particularly well appointed with diagnostic equipment, Degem autotronics systems, computer-integrated manufacture (CIM) and training aids.

10. Employers are supportive and encourage trainees to attend off-the-job training. Some companies also allow trainees time at work to complete work set by college staff and to build their portfolios of evidence. This support, combined with the regular visits by assessors and liaison officers, motivates trainees and keeps them on target to achieve their awards. Trainees collect evidence from the workplace and produce work of a high standard. Visits to work by some college staff provide

a good balance of occupational and pastoral support. Issues are quickly dealt with and assessors and tutors involve work supervisors where appropriate. BTS staff have little influence on the type of training provided at work. The link between off-the-job training and training at work is tenuous.

11. Trainees working towards mechanical engineering NVQs at level 3 are only assessed when they have completed their evidence gathering for the whole qualification. Most of the evidence produced is in the form of written records, created by the trainees and supported by witness testimonies. There are no observations of trainees' performance at work. There is no overall tracking of the evidence and trainees are unable to judge how they are progressing towards their qualification or know what units they have completed.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

12. There are 35 trainees working towards qualifications in business administration, of whom 31 are on modern apprenticeship programmes and four are national trainees. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in business administration, level 2 in information technology, level 3 in implementing information technology solutions, and the association of accounting technicians (AAT) equivalent to levels 3 and 4. Full-time and contracted part-time assessors carry out assessment. Qualified and experienced tutors and lecturers deliver off-the-job training. All trainees are in full-time employment in a wide range of companies including multinational electronic companies, accountancies, solicitors' offices, construction companies, and in the public service sector or at the college. Some trainees attend off-the-job training at the college one day a week and some are assessed and supported solely in the workplace throughout their NVQ qualification. AAT trainees have the option to work towards foundation stage 2, intermediate stage 3 and technician stage 4. Tutors and lecturers are either qualified or working towards assessor qualifications. Of the 32 trainees who started NVQ programmes in 1997-98, one trainee has successfully completed, 11 have left without achieving their qualifications and 19 (59 per cent) are still on the training programme. In 1998-99, 19 trainees joined the training programmes, and 15 (78 per cent) are still in training.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ good workplace opportunities for assessment
- ◆ high levels of contact between liaison officers, trainees and supervisors
- ◆ good use of work-based evidence in AAT
- ◆ good college information technology resources
- ◆ additional workplace training courses



### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of assessment continuity
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment in business administration
- ◆ inadequate support for level 3 trainees
- ◆ limited on-the-job NVQ training
- ◆ some trainees lack awareness of programme requirements

13. Trainees' job roles are diverse. Employers provide the opportunity for trainees to extend their knowledge and understanding of the work environment and gather evidence for assessment. Administration trainees use key office systems such as e-mail, stock control, reception and client care, databases, spreadsheets and word processing programmes. Trainees at level 3 learn supervisory skills and have levels of responsibility which includes the training of others. Accountancy trainees use financial techniques for the calculation of pay and national insurance contributions, audit systems and double entry book-keeping and ledger work. Information technology trainees install products such as motherboards, hard drives, speaker systems and CD ROMs. BTS's liaison officers visit trainees regularly every six to eight weeks to monitor progress. This process includes trainees, assessors and supervisors using a system of reports, telephone contact and visits.

14. Accountancy trainees are employed in companies where they use their accountancy skills and collect a continuous flow of good quality assessment evidence and witness testimony to add to their portfolios. The standard of the evidence demonstrates additional competencies to assessors who are evaluating trainees' college work. This integration of college and work based evidence enhances the quality of trainees final portfolios. BTS staff use every opportunity to ensure information technology installation training and assessment is offered in realistic circumstances using well-resourced technology bays for rebuilding, maintaining and repairing computer systems owned by the college or those from local employers. This produces real work pressures and a wide variety of technical problems for trainees to solve. Trainees are in good work placements and benefit from additional workplace training which includes sales courses, telephone techniques, customer care, use of spreadsheets and logistics, and specialist training on library work. This enriches the learning experiences of trainees.

15. BTS has suffered from frequent changes of college staff in the last 12 months, which resulted in gaps in assessment for accountancy and administration trainees. Some work supervisors are qualified assessors, but they are not being utilised despite the problems with staff changes. Witness testimonies are not being provided, so reducing the amount of real work skills that are evidenced for assessment. The majority of trainees are trained and assessed only at work. They are shown how to interpret the NVQ standards and collect evidence from work. Trainees do not benefit from portfolio-building sessions and do not receive any structured theory training which is available to day-release trainees.

16. Once trainees reach level 3, it is assumed that they will be able to request assessment and take control of their progress. However, this places an over-reliance on trainees' abilities and there is a lack of appropriate support at this level. Some trainees are not yet ready to work towards level 3 without support and find the transition from level 2 to 3 difficult. Some trainees struggle to understand the standards, gather evidence and meet action plan deadlines. There is an expectation that young trainees are able to achieve level 3 without a structured approach to their development. Some assessors rely on trainees contacting them when they are ready to be assessed, or when they have a problem. Some trainees are ill-informed about the modern apprenticeship framework and the requirement to complete key skills assessments. A lack of understanding of the qualifications and the late 'bolt on' nature of the key skills delivery is resulting in some slow progress and missed target dates.

### **Hair & beauty (hairdressing)**

### **Grade 3**

17. BTS has 103 trainees in hairdressing, of whom 90 are national trainees and 13 are modern apprentices. With the exception of two trainees, all are aiming for NVQs at level 2 in hairdressing. All trainees are employed, working in a total of 65 salons, spread across a wide area of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Most training and assessment take place in the college, which trainees attend for one day a week. There is an increasing amount of work-based assessment by college tutors and salon assessors. A summer school is held at the college to provide off-the-job training during the college's summer vacation. Off-the-job training combines practical and theory lessons. The college has four hairdressing salons. Trainees have access to computers which they can use to develop their key skills. BTS's liaison officers are occupationally experienced and visit trainees at work every eight to 12 weeks to monitor their progress.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of work-based assessment
- ◆ insufficient diversity of evidence
- ◆ inadequate recording of assessments
- ◆ infrequent assessment for some trainees
- ◆ no action plans and reviews of progress towards qualification

18. Significant progress has been made in remedying all five of the weaknesses identified at the first inspection. Four of the weaknesses have been sufficiently overcome for that aspect of the training now to be considered satisfactory. BTS's staff conduct work-based assessments and several new work-based assessors are starting to assess trainees in their salons. Portfolios now contain a broad range of evidence, including details of clients, products used and, in some cases, 'before' and 'after' photographs of the clients. Assessments are now clearly recorded.

Trainees' progress is regularly reviewed at work and at college. Action plans are produced as part of the progress reviews. Assessment is still not sufficiently frequent for some trainees in their first year of training. Internal verification is not planned in advance to ensure that a full range of assessment methods is used by each assessor. Inexperienced assessors are not observed more frequently than experienced assessors. The self-assessment report did not clearly identify the weaknesses relating to assessment and retention. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by BTS in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good involvement of employers in training

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ insufficient assessments for some first-year trainees

19. Trainees are employed in supportive, good workplaces. Employers provide well-structured training programmes with an emphasis on achieving practical hairdressing skills. Trainees have time allocated for training each week when they receive individual practical lessons. Trainees bring in their own models to these sessions. Some salons have two training sessions each week and others encourage their trainees to observe experienced stylists at times when the salons are less busy. Most trainees have their on-the-job training enhanced by additional courses, trade shows and hairdressing competitions. For example, they attend manufacturers' training events on colouring, one-day cutting courses in London and, in one case, training programmes on how to attach hair extensions. Salons are well equipped with modern, professional equipment and hairdressing products. Employers have details of the new training course offered by BTS. Many salons link their on-the-job training to the off-the-job training effectively. If trainees are late for their off-the-job training, their salons are advised. Employers are invited to the college regularly for hairdressing and employers' events.

20. Off-the-job training is generally of a good standard. Trainees have good practical skills. Structured theory lessons are offered using a variety of teaching methods. Trainees enjoy the theoretical side of their training. Training staff have produced good learning materials which support the theory teaching for each of the NVQ units. These are supported by a variety of textbooks, which trainees use to research different hairdressing topics. Trainees' portfolios contain a wide range of evidence. Most contain consultation sheets and assessment plans and, for chemical treatments, clients' record cards. Some contain hair samples and photographic evidence of work carried out. Trainees are assessed during off-the-job training days at college and by training staff in the workplace. Employers are becoming

more involved with assessment and BTS has offered further training to employers' staff to help them become assessors. This has been successful in a number of salons and there are currently 22 salon staff who are qualified as assessors.

21. There is good involvement of employers in training. A group of about 15 employers is working with BTS to help promote training. This group meets with staff from BTS on a monthly basis to discuss training issues and promote aspects of training such as competition work. Employers in this group have also been involved in the design of the off-the-job training course. All employers in the group take turns to attend practical off-the-job training sessions at the college to act as extra tutors. This close involvement by employers ensures that they have good 'first-hand' knowledge of the off-the-job training provided to their trainees. Trainees working for employers in this group also receive a broader range of training techniques in their on-the-job training than trainees working for other salons. BTS is responsive to the needs of employers. For example, it supports one salon which runs its own practical training by providing theory training and internal verification of assessments.

22. There are few assessment opportunities in the first year of training for trainees undertaking level 2 NVQs in hairdressing. Most trainees achieved two of their nine NVQ units in this time. The college set a general target of two complete units for first year trainees in 1999-2000. Although trainees range widely in practical ability, some of those with their own regular clients make the same progress as trainees who have little direct responsibility for services to clients. Most off-the-job assessments take place during the second year of training. More clients are available to second-year trainees in the off-the-job training salons, which provides more assessment opportunities. BTS recognises the need to increase the level of assessment for first-year trainees. The training course which started a few weeks prior to reinspection has more clients scheduled for first-year trainees and a target of a minimum of three units to be completed by trainees in the first year. In addition, more work-based assessors are assessing trainees in the workplace.

23. Retention and achievement rates are poor. In 1998-99, of the 63 trainees who started national traineeships, 33 (53 per cent) left without a qualification, 20 (31 per cent) achieved their intended qualification and 10 (15 per cent) are still in training. In 1999-2000, of the 70 trainees who joined as national trainees, 29 (41 per cent) left without a qualification and 41 (59 per cent) are still in training. Retention on the modern apprenticeship programme is particularly low. In 1997-98, 21 trainees joined the programme. Of these, 13 (61 per cent) left without a qualification, seven left with an NVQ at level 2 and one left with an NVQ at level 3. In 1998-99, 10 trainees started on the programme, of whom eight have left without a qualification and two are still in training. In 1999-2000, eight trainees joined the programme. Two have left without a qualification and six are still in training. BTS does keep data on the reasons trainees leave but has not been able to identify any main or single cause for the high dropout rate.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

24. The college has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is regularly reviewed and updated. A summary of the policy is included in the staff handbook and a version of the policy has been produced for students and trainees. Staff support the policies and the college's action plans. Both trainees' and staff's induction processes include reference to the policy. The college has recognised the diversity of needs in its community, providing a prayer room and a full range of student services which are available to all trainees who attend the college. Currently 5 per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a 50 per cent split of men to women, although the majority of trainees in engineering are men and in hairdressing are women. The college has a comprehensive complaints and grievance procedure.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policies
- ◆ good staff development in equal opportunity issues
- ◆ marketing materials project anti-stereotypical messages
- ◆ active involvement in projects to increase number of trainees from under-represented groups
- ◆ regular monitoring and analysis of equal opportunity data

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no targets set to recruit more from under-represented groups
- ◆ low awareness by trainees of equality of opportunity issues

25. The college has a clear direction and purpose regarding equality of opportunity. Equal opportunity policies include anti-harassment, disability and anti-discrimination policies. The format of the policies has been well thought through, and they are easy to read, detailed and comprehensive. All staff have equality of opportunity training. There is a comprehensive staff development programme, which covers equality of opportunity in its widest sense. Sessions are repeated to enable staff to access the training throughout the year. Staff have a thorough grasp and understanding of equality issues. Throughout the college, on all the sites, there are many examples of well-designed marketing materials. High-quality photographs depict trainees in non-traditional roles and promotional materials are available in a number of languages.

26. The college takes an active approach to equality of opportunity. It has undertaken self-assessment focusing on equal opportunities to identify how the college can widen participation within the community. It is also involved in a number of initiatives with partner organisations locally, including the TEC. The college is working through partnerships with local companies to secure employment for under-represented groups.

27. Data on trainees' recruitment, trainees on programme and leavers, are routinely monitored and analysed within the training unit. No targets for the recruitment of under-represented groups have been set. Little analysis is made of why the percentage of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds does not match the local and county profiles. No strategies have been identified for the unit to target specific groups. Although trainees attend college for off-the-job training, most are poorly informed of the college's equal opportunities policy. Many trainees are already employed before they start the training programmes. Some employers do not have an equal opportunities policy and are unaware of the college's policy. There is no reinforcement of the college's policy in the workplace. However, liaison officers informally monitor equal opportunities during review visits to trainees in the workplace. Any issues identified on these visits are acted upon promptly. Liaison officers intervene to make sure trainees are well treated and protected. If necessary, trainees are moved to another provider.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

28. Liaison officers and college tutors interview all trainees before they start their training. During the interview, trainees undergo a key skills profile test and an initial assessment. All trainees attend at least two induction programmes, one to the training unit and one to the NVQ training programme. For those in full-time employment, a separate induction to the NVQ is provided at work. Trainees are recruited through a variety of routes. The unit has effective links with careers services and local employers and also advertises training opportunities. A team of liaison officers is responsible for monitoring trainees' progress regularly and visiting trainees at work.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ frequent opportunities to discuss personal or training problems
- ◆ extra guidance and support for trainees with additional learning needs
- ◆ detailed informative handbooks and literature
- ◆ comprehensive college support system
- ◆ good health and safety practice
- ◆ special care taken to protect young trainees

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic accreditation on prior learning
- ◆ initial assessment results not used to inform individual training plans
- ◆ no formal system for providing guidance on progression

29. Liaison officers take full responsibility for giving support and personal advice to trainees and are responsive to their individual needs. They visit trainees in the workplace regularly and are in frequent contact with both trainees and their supervisors by telephone and e-mail. Liaison officers write honest and detailed reports about trainees and system problems, enabling them to be dealt with quickly and effectively. If appropriate, liaison officers arrange joint meetings at work with supervisors and trainees. Although formal review meetings are quarterly, liaison officers often visit trainees requiring advice and guidance weekly or twice a week. There is a range of additional help for trainees with learning support needs. The college provides individual literacy and numeracy sessions. Trainees with mobility difficulties or other problems receive help with transport and there is child-care provision. A special information technology unit, PLATO, has recently been opened. Trainees who need to, develop their basic skills work with a sophisticated computer learning system. The college provides an expert tutor who sits with the trainees, guides them and keeps a separate log of their progress. This log is printed out with graphics to act as a reminder of the progress made.

30. Trainees receive comprehensive handbooks and information on the college's equal opportunities and anti-harassment policies. They also have a pack from the training unit containing a full set of guidelines on training, health and safety, and the student charter. All trainees are entitled to use the full resources of the college and can access support easily. These include personal and financial advice, language support for those to whom English is not their first language and referral to external support organisations for specialist help. Trainees retain and understand the essential information given during induction on emergency procedures, the dangers of hazardous substances and other key regulations. This important area is tested in writing to ensure trainees have a full understanding of health and safety issues. The college has a very responsible attitude to the safety of young people. Staff are made aware of their responsibilities and ensure trainees have transport to and from work and college. There is a special emphasis on evening studies when trainees are offered a free transport scheme, including the use of taxis where necessary.

31. For some trainees, prior experience is discussed and recognised at the start of their training programmes. However, this is not a systematic process nor does it operate in sufficient depth. Few staff are adequately trained or qualified to ensure comprehensive coverage of this area. Many trainees do have previous experience and qualifications, which would either exempt them from elements or units of their main award or help with assessment on competence in key skills. All trainees have an interview at the start of their training programmes. For AAT trainees these interviews include assessing technical competence and for engineering trainees, a mathematical test is undertaken, both of which inform the trainees' training



programmes. All trainees have an initial literacy and numeracy test, but they are not informed of the results. At present, this test does not automatically inform the trainees individual training programme. In some cases, work supervisors are the first to notice that trainees need additional support and then the time taken to administer the test is wasted. There is no formal link between the PLATO information technology facility and initial assessment. The PLATO tutor is not informed of the results of initial assessment.

32. Some trainees do not attend college for off-the-job training. They are less knowledgeable about the training programmes they are on: for example, many are not aware of the key skills requirements of their modern apprenticeship programme. Although when trainees have completed their qualifications they receive advice and guidance, this is informal and unsystematic. For trainees who leave the programme before completing their training, there is no formal mechanism to review their options for other types of training.

## Management of training

## Grade 3

33. The training unit is responsible for recruiting trainees to appropriate TEC-funded training programmes, visiting trainees in the workplace and referring trainees to programme areas within the college for off-the-job training. Many of the trainees are already in employment when they are referred to the college for training. The manager of the unit reports directly to the deputy principal. There is a clearly documented staff recruitment policy and all staff are appraised annually. There has been considerable growth in TEC-funded training provision over the last three years. The college has recognised the need to integrate on- and off-the-job training and the college is in the process of reviewing the assessment of workplace training, which varies according to occupational area in the college. The majority of assessment is still carried out in the college.

### GOOD PRACTICE

*Liaison officers have recently held employers' evenings for hair salon owners to get them more involved with the training and interest them in becoming qualified assessors. The meetings are centred on trying to balance the needs of the employers with those of the trainees and attempt to integrate off-the-job NVQ training with the development of trainees at work.*

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive staff induction programme
- ◆ good management communication and effective teamwork
- ◆ comprehensive staff development programme
- ◆ effective use of management information

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ management not informed by reporting systems
- ◆ key skills not developed across all occupational areas

34. The college has a detailed and effective staff induction programme that fully informs staff of the college's policies and procedures and prepares them for their job role. All staff are allocated a mentor, who is responsible for ensuring that they



are supported throughout the first year of their employment. The induction includes a college-wide and department induction. One afternoon each week is allocated for staff development and this includes sessions on equality of opportunity, health and safety and staff training and development. In addition to the extensive college induction, staff employed in the training unit are also taken through a unit induction. New staff are given useful information on the unit's activities including how to liaise and build relationships with trainees and employers and guidance on carrying out monitoring visits. All new staff shadow an experienced member of the team before taking on a case load of trainees of their own. This comprehensive process ensures that all staff are aware of the work-based training programmes and the importance of the workplace monitoring and liaison visits. The college also produces managers and employees' guides to induction which include induction review dates, and personal induction and training details which record staff activities and action plans for a six-month period.

35. The college has a responsive and well-planned staff development programme which aims to support staff in their professional and personal development. Staff development requirements are identified through the college's appraisal system and are also considered when specifically requested by staff. The college provides internal and external staff development opportunities. All academic staff undertake qualifications in teaching and training. Any staff development identified through the appraisal system is monitored and evaluated by the human resource department to ensure the relevance of the training.

36. The training unit works as an effective team with regular and minuted team meetings. Staff work together to ensure that trainees are monitored and supported. Where problems have arisen, staff within the unit have acted promptly to resolve them. Staff work together to ensure that trainees' interests are best served. Liaison officers ensure that they communicate frequently with off-the-job training tutors and attend many of the programme area meetings. The training unit uses management information effectively. Detailed reports are widely circulated to team members, updating staff on recruitment trends, trainees' progress, and records of monitoring visits and the achievement of targets.

37. Off-the-job training is carried out in the college's teaching departments. In some areas assessors visit the workplace to monitor trainees progress; in other areas only liaison officers visit trainees. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers are unaware of what training takes place at the college. The college has little influence over the level, frequency and structure of training at work, which is largely at the discretion of employers. There is an effective system of recording monitoring visits and copies are given to trainees. Copies of the progress reviews are sent to occupational tutors and co-ordinators in the teaching departments and to the training administrators. However, there is no involvement of unit managers in this process. Where liaison officers identify problems over several visits, the problems have circulated between staff and have not been resolved by managers.

38. The college does have a key skills policy which has recently been updated. However, although there is a significant number of trainees on national traineeship and modern apprenticeship programmes, there has been little development of key skills. It is up to individual programme areas to develop the delivery and assessment of the key skills in occupational areas. This has resulted in trainees having to complete the key skills at the end of their training programme; creating the need for additional evidence and slow progress. The development of key skills is patchy across occupational areas.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

39. The college has a well-documented quality assurance system and a designated manager to operate the system. Procedures cover programme reviews, lesson observations, the interview process, trainees' progress, staff recruitment, development and appraisals. There are also internal verification guidelines and a revised key skills policy. The college has developed a self-assessment process, which focuses on programme areas. Each programme area produces a self-assessment report, which feeds into the whole college self-assessment report and action plan. The training unit has not been part of the self-assessment process and therefore, for the purpose of inspection, a separate self-assessment report for TEC-funded training was produced. Overall the unit's self-assessment report was accurate. However, weaknesses in some occupational areas were not identified. Inspectors confirmed the grades given by the unit in engineering, business administration and quality assurance. Inspectors awarded higher grades in equal opportunities and trainee support. In hair and beauty and management of training, inspectors awarded lower grades than given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ thorough monitoring of teaching and learning practice
- ◆ effective target-setting and monitoring of trainees' performance
- ◆ regular monitoring of the quality of training
- ◆ trainees' feedback is regularly sought

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ the quality of internal verification varies across occupational areas
- ◆ insufficient involvement of employers
- ◆ no minimum service level agreements with teaching departments
- ◆ college's self-assessment processes not integrated

40. Programme area managers observe the teaching of all trainers and lecturers at least twice each year. Each observation is graded and recorded in some detail providing constructive criticism for each member of staff. In some departments,

observations are reviewed as part of the appraisal system to help identify staff development needs. Observations ensure that trainers receive regular detailed feedback on their performance and direction on how they can improve their teaching techniques and classroom management. The training unit sets and consistently meets performance targets. All staff are kept up to date with progress towards targets and remedial action is taken if targets are missed. Wall charts provide a simple but effective display of the unit's current level of performance.

41. There is an effective system for reviewing and monitoring training programmes at team and management level. Programme team meetings are held regularly and culminate in formal programme reports. Quantitative data is used to inform the decision-making process with a review of retention, achievement and feedback from trainees. Specific areas of training are reviewed during the year, including induction and the quality of teaching and learning. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and action points agreed with timescales set. Once the action has been completed, it is signed off by the member of staff originally on the report. The findings of the reports are reviewed at senior management meetings and any points that have an impact across the college, or cannot be solved at programme team level, are taken forward by the senior management team.

42. Trainees are asked to complete a number of questionnaires during their training. Feedback is sought on the quality of training as well as on the work-based element of the training programme. Where trainees have identified specific issues, these are also reviewed during programme reviews and in team meetings held with both liaison officers and teaching staff. Trainees' responses are analysed and included in programme team reviews. However, the college does not formally seek feedback from employers and there is little involvement of employers in the training programmes. The training unit has developed and sent two sets of questionnaires to employers over the last eighteen months. These questionnaires lack refinement and the results have not been fully analysed or used to improve the quality of work-based training.

43. Although the college has clear guidelines on internal verification which are discussed at senior management meetings, the guidelines are not being implemented across all occupational areas within the college. The guidelines reflect good practice in internal verification by stating that assessments should be sampled throughout the assessment process and that internal verifiers should have a sampling plan and hold regular assessors' meetings. In business administration and hairdressing, internal verification is based on completed portfolios of work and happens only at the end of the trainees training programme. In engineering at level 2, internal verification is continuous, but at level 3, internal verification is again based on assessed portfolios of evidence. In general, across the college there is little internal verification planning, sporadic internal verifiers' meetings and no observation of assessors as part of the process. In addition, full internal verification reports on portfolios of evidence are not always completed, and feedback to assessors sometimes takes place over the telephone.

44. The college has developed service level agreements for all its business units;



quality and planning, finance and management information, human resources, estates, guidance and learning support services and marketing. However, these agreements have not been implemented. There are no minimum service level agreements between the training unit and programme areas to enable the effective monitoring of the training programmes. Currently, the college's self-assessment report is based on curriculum and programme areas. It is part of the college's quality assurance framework. A separate evaluation of work-based training is carried out by the training unit. There is little integration of self-assessment between the programme areas and the training unit.