



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1999

REINSPECTION DECEMBER 2000

South Kent College

SUMMARY

South Kent College's training in construction and prevocational programmes is good. Training in all other occupational areas is satisfactory, although hairdressing was not satisfactory, when first inspected in October 1999. Off-the-job training is well planned and effective. There are good links between the academic staff and others involved in work-based training. On-the-job training was poorly managed at the time of the first inspection, and is still insufficiently well planned, though staff roles are now well designed to address this. All college managers now have a better understanding of work-based training and quality assurance systems are now effective.

As a result of the reinspection of South Kent College, the original published report text for hair and beauty, the management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall introduction and the inspection 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
Construction	2
Engineering	3
Business administration	3
Hair and beauty	4
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair and beauty	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good, well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ high-quality portfolio work
- ◆ supportive employers
- ◆ clear management and quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ incorporation of training into college's strategic plans
- ◆ systematic use of self-assessment



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped key skills training and assessment
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ poor review procedures for trainees
- ◆ insufficiently planned on-the-job training

INTRODUCTION

1. South Kent College (the college) is a large general further education college incorporated under the *Further & Higher Education Act* of 1992. The college is multi-sited, with four main campuses located at Folkestone, Ashford, South Ashford and Dover. It has 13 curriculum divisions and six business support divisions, each managed by a head of division. South Kent College is contracted by the Learning & Business Link Company, the local training and enterprise council (TEC), to provide work-based training for young people and long-term unemployed adults. These contracts are managed by the training services unit, which is based at the South Ashford campus. Since the first inspection, the college has ceased to offer training to New Deal clients. The college continues to provide training programmes funded through the Single Regeneration Budget and the European Social Fund.

2. Work-based training for young people is provided in the occupational areas of agriculture, construction, engineering, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty, and health, care and public services. The programmes lead to national vocational qualifications (NVQs), in many cases as part of foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships. All adult programmes are foundation for work. At the time of the first inspection, there were 407 trainees in work-based training and 68 clients on New Deal 18-24 programmes. The occupational areas of agriculture, retailing and customer service, and hospitality had too few trainees to be inspected. There are now 481 trainees, as shown in the table below, and no New Deal clients.

3. South Kent College serves a large geographical area of 1,350 square kilometres and a population of over 300,000. Ashford, with a population of 98,000, was originally a market and railway engineering town. The demise of the traditional industries in the town has been compensated for by the development of business parks catering for high technology firms. The area of Dover and Deal, with a population of 107,000, boasts one of the world's busiest ferry ports and derives much of its income from transport and communications. Folkestone, sited within the Shepway region and with a population of 99,000, is a traditional seaside resort with hotel and catering as one of its main industries. It has a significant number of elderly residents, and care services provide an important source of employment. Since the opening of the channel tunnel, transport and distribution have increased as major employment sectors in the town in response to a general shift in employment in the region from tunnel construction and ferry associated services. Much of Kent is rural and characterised by small towns and villages. Land-based industries continue to make an important contribution to the county's economy. The county is an area of natural beauty and attracts many visitors to its numerous sites of historical and cultural interest. The area is well served by good access to London and Europe by rail, road and air links. The area, as a whole, is not part of the 'affluent' Southeast, and the Kent economy lags behind other south-eastern counties. 2.8 per cent of the workforce in Kent were unemployed in November

2000, compared with 1.8 per cent in the Southeast, excluding London. In Dover and Shepway the rate was higher, at 4.3 per cent. The national rate in November was 3.3 per cent. The number of people from minority ethnic groups in the college's catchment area is low and estimated to be around 1 per cent of the population, at the time of the last census. Recently arrived asylum seekers have contributed to increasing ethnic diversity.

4. Secondary education in Kent is selective and most towns are served by grammar schools. In 2000, 51 per cent of school leavers achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. The college recruits most of its students from non-selective schools, and has partnership arrangements with three of these. In these three schools, fewer than 17 per cent of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grade C or above.

Work-based trainees December 2000

	Advanced modern apprentices	Foundation modern apprentices	Other young people	Work-based training for adults	Total
Agriculture	18	15	12	0	45
Construction	93	13	24	0	130
Engineering	51	41	5	0	97
Management & professional	12	0	0	0	12
Business administration	3	38	3	0	44
Retailing & customer service	1	0	0	0	1
Leisure, sport & travel	0	1	0	0	1
Hospitality	9	4	1	0	14
Hair & beauty	9	5	3	0	17
Health, care & public services	4	1	16	0	21
Foundation for work	0	0	0	99	99
TOTAL	200	118	64	99	481

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Self-assessment is an integral part of quality assurance at South Kent College. It includes evaluation of work-based training. Each head of division takes responsibility for their area of the curriculum. The views of students and trainees are taken into account in some occupational areas, by the use of questionnaires asking for feedback. A separate self-assessment report for the Training Standards Council's (TSC) inspection was produced in May 1999. This was comprehensive, and included a clear action plan. The college wrote another detailed action plan in March 2000, following the first inspection. It produced subsequent updates of this, and a short report summarising its progress by July 2000.

6. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 41 days at South Kent College in October 1999, at the same time as inspectors from the Further Education Funding Council. Inspectors visited the college's four main sites, and 25 work placements and off-site projects. They spoke with 85 trainees and 28 workplace supervisors, and observed 20 instructional sessions. They held 53 meetings with college staff, including the principal, vice-principal, divisional heads, equal opportunities officer, training managers, co-ordinators, assessors, and tutors. At the reinspection in December 2000, a team of two inspectors spent a total of six days at the college. They interviewed staff and trainees, and visited nine companies where they spoke to nine supervisors. Inspectors on both teams examined a range of documents including business plans, quality assurance files, TEC contracts, service agreements, internal and external audit reports, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, job descriptions and staff's qualifications. Trainees' files and work portfolios were inspected. Data relating to trainees' achievement and progression and equal opportunities were viewed. At reinspection, three instruction sessions were observed and all awarded grade 2.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		1	1			2
Engineering		2				2
Business administration	1	2	1			4
Hair & beauty		3	2	1		6
Health, care & public services	1		1			2
Foundation for work		2	2			4
Total	2	10	7	1	0	20

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

7. A total of 106 trainees are following work-based training programmes in construction and 29 clients are following New Deal programmes. Training is offered at NVQ levels 2 and 3 in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, plumbing, painting and decorating and electrical installation for modern apprentices, national trainees and those on other work-based training programmes. Currently, there are two brickwork trainees on other training programmes; six carpentry and joinery trainees, of whom one is a national trainee and five are on other training programmes; 15 plumbing trainees, of whom two are modern apprentices; one modern apprentice taking painting and decorating; and 82 electrical installation trainees, of whom 13 are on other training programmes and 69 are modern apprentices. Twenty-four New Deal clients are following a range of construction trades within the full-time education and training option and five clients are part of the environment task force. Trainees attend South Kent College campuses in South Ashford and Folkestone, on a day-release basis, where training and assessment for trainees in building crafts is carried out. Some trainees are employed and some are having work experience with one of a range of local companies to complete the on-the-job training requirements of their NVQs.

8. The self-assessment report failed to identify some key strengths and the quality of training in construction was undervalued. Good off-the-job training and the high standard of portfolio work achieved by trainees were not highlighted. No mention was made of trainees' high levels of achievement. Reference to good resources for training was made and insufficient work-based assessment and underdevelopment of key skills in training were identified as weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality off-the job training
- ◆ high-quality trainees' portfolios
- ◆ good material resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ strong employer/tutor partnerships to support training
- ◆ good range of training opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ high retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of systematic planning for on-the-job training
- ◆ no work-based assessment
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills training on some programmes
- ◆ late registration of some trainees with awarding body

9. Training programmes are supported by good systems for recording trainees' progress. Staff have developed learning support materials and assessment packs which give trainees detailed guidance on building portfolios of assessment evidence. Trainees are further helped in portfolio building by tutorial sessions, during which staff give individual help to trainees. Trainees' portfolios contain high-quality work which demonstrates good vocational knowledge and clear evidence of acquired job skills. Training is well resourced with good-quality machines and tools and adequate supplies of materials for training. Staff initiatives have led to supplementary resources being supplied by local firms. In machine woodworking, for example, a local manufacturing company donates a range of good-quality hardwoods and other sheet materials for trainees' use. Supply of good materials allows trainees to produce good-quality practical work, which is motivating for them, and achieve high standards of job skills. Employers are supportive of training and provide on-the-job training to complement NVQ requirements. In some cases, company job rotation schemes enable trainees to gain occupational experience in a range of different jobs. Trainees' express satisfaction with their training and demonstrate good occupational knowledge and understanding acquired through attendance at well-planned and effective off-the-job training sessions. Trainees are regularly assessed at college and their full involvement in assessment and review sessions means that they can influence training plans through negotiation with trainers and employers.

10. College tutors have established strong and effective links with employers and use co-operative working relationships to improve training. For example, tutors have worked with employers to develop a new NVQ programme in electrical installations suited to the needs of trainees and employers. College staff are working with employers to develop schemes for work-based assessment as part of the new programme. The College has established an extensive register of employers providing employment or work experience in a wide range of work environments. Usually, trainees are placed with employers who are able to offer work suited to trainees' requirements and preferences. Levels of work supervision are appropriate to trainees' needs and, for trainees with the necessary skills and confidence, working without direct supervision is used to develop their ability to work independently. Trainees are well motivated by staff and employers and work hard to make progress. Trainees have a good understanding of the link between on- and off-the-job training and use their theoretical knowledge effectively to complete tasks at work. As part of gathering assessment evidence, trainees make good use of witness testimonies from employers and work supervisors. Retention levels are high. In 1998-99, for example, 88 per cent of trainees completed training. Trainees make good progress and achieve well. In 1998-99, all trainees leaving programmes achieved an NVQ. Progression into employment is good. For the three years from 1996-97 to 1998-99, three-quarters of leavers obtained full employment.

11. On-the-job training is not planned and there are no written schemes of work to guide training. Employers provide good job skills training, but training at work is incidental and not systematically linked to off-the-job training. In many cases, theory and practical training are not synchronised and skills acquired on the job are not supplemented by work in college sessions. College staff encourage trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

Staff in the electrical sector have developed a range of learning materials for training in information technology key skills. The materials cover a range of activities, which relate to the electrical installations industry. Currently these materials are being piloted with sample groups of trainees before full adoption of use in work-based training.

and employers to record work-based evidence to support assessment in response to new requirements from the awarding body. However, assessment is not conducted at work. In spite of information provided to employers by the college, some employers are insufficiently aware of the requirements and structure of the NVQ programmes. The frequency of trainees' progress reviews is inadequate in many cases. Where scheduled reviews have been missed, support for trainees at work by college staff is inadequate. Procedures adopted by staff for recording the results of trainees' review sessions are not standard and this leads to variation in the updating of individual training plans which, in some cases, are poor. Apart from electrical installation training which has the bulk of trainees requiring training in key skills, the incorporation of key skills into training is underdeveloped. Most trainees have poor awareness of the key skills requirements for training. Key skills training and assessment have yet to be included as an integral part of work-based training. Instead, they are completed at the end of the occupational programme. In plumbing, late registration of trainees with the awarding body has an adverse affect on trainees' progress. Some unregistered trainees have inadequate access to assessment information, and assessment of their acquired vocational skills is delayed.

Engineering**Grade 3**

12. There are 74 trainees, and 10 clients following the full-time education and training option of the New Deal, in the occupational areas of agriculture, electronic engineering, mechanical engineering, motor vehicle and plant maintenance. Of these, 37 are modern apprentices, seven are national trainees and 40, including those on New Deal, are following other traineeships leading to NVQs. Eighteen people are being trained in agricultural machinery servicing, two in electronics, 18 in mechanical engineering, 28 in motor-vehicle servicing or body repair and 18 in plant maintenance. The college is an accredited centre for training and assessment with two awarding bodies. College staff have established links with many local companies, most being small- to medium-sized companies with one or two trainees. All but three trainees are in full employment, with the other three trainees in work-experience placements. All trainees attend college on day release for one day a week for off-the-job theory training sessions. Skills Training co-ordinators are scheduled to review trainees' progress every three months in the workplace and at college alternately. Training co-ordinators are not required by the college to possess engineering qualifications or to have occupational experience within this area. NVQ level 3 assessments are largely carried out by college staff visiting trainees in the workplace. Assessment at one company is carried out by work-based assessors. All internal verification is conducted by college staff.

13. The self-assessment report is comprehensive in its consideration of training. The report is self-critical and inspectors agreed with all the weaknesses identified by the college. Some of the weaknesses included in the self-assessment report had been addressed by the college prior to inspection. Strengths identified by inspectors are not highlighted in the report. The good standard of training and high

levels of trainees' skills are not sufficiently emphasised. Inspectors, however, awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good occupational skills of trainees
- ◆ effective, high-quality on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ co-operative and effective working relationships between college trainers and employers in motor-vehicle servicing
- ◆ good links between on- and off-the-job training in many cases
- ◆ high standards of portfolio work

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ poor resources in motor vehicle and agriculture
- ◆ low awareness of key skills
- ◆ no work-based assessments in some areas
- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in some occupational areas

14. Trainees receive a thorough induction at the college before progressing to work-based training. Comprehensive information is given and trainees acquire good understanding of the structure of training programmes. All trainees are initially assessed using standard diagnostic tests, and results are used to identify their learning support needs. Generally, trainees' additional learning needs are fully met by appropriately trained college staff. Accreditation of trainees' prior learning is used effectively and enables trainees to by-pass elements of training and make faster progress. The accreditation of students' prior learning is especially effective in motor-vehicle training. The standard of the weekly day-release off-the-job training is good. Training sessions are well prepared and employ a mixture of theory and practical training which engages and sustains the interest of trainees. Lessons are taught at a pace and level suited to trainees' needs. Trainees demonstrate good understanding, and display high standards, of occupational skills. College trainers are appropriately qualified and possess a depth of occupational experience and knowledge acquired over many years.

15. The commercial enterprise activities of the body repair shop and the vehicle servicing departments enable trainees working at college to train in real working environments. Off-the-job training involves all aspects of commercial work and includes relevant paperwork, such as job sheets and invoices, giving trainees rounded experience of a working environment. In many cases, body shop work completed by trainees extends beyond the requirements of the NVQ. Trainees complete tasks to high standards of craftsmanship. Trainees are encouraged to work on their own vehicles, or those of relatives and friends, and this creates additional incentives for trainees to develop their job skills and take pride in their work.

16. On some programmes, assessments are not carried out in the workplace. For example, in motor-vehicle body repair and agriculture all assessments are carried out at college under simulated working conditions. However, in motor-vehicle servicing, co-operative working relationships between college trainers and employers have resulted in monthly visits to trainees at work by trainers in order to conduct NVQ level 3 assessments. Frequent assessment at work is well established and effective in mechanical engineering as well, with good involvement by employers. Where assessment is conducted by work-based assessors, college staff make regular visits to internally verify assessments. Good use is made of college staff visits to discuss progress with trainees and to set schedules for learning. Most engineering trainees receive good on-the-job training and frequent opportunities for NVQ level 3 work-based assessments. Trainees' logbooks are regularly checked by college staff and action plans for gathering evidence are agreed and recorded.

17. In plant maintenance training, some employers have written schemes of well-planned on-the-job training. In many cases, on- and off-the-job training is closely linked and well co-ordinated. One company is particularly effective in linking on- and off-the-job training. Trainees' work supervisors record all elements of current off-the-job training and match these to job-skills training. Trainees are assigned to skilled colleagues to carry out work tasks directly linked to theoretical work completed at college. In all programme areas, trainees' portfolio work is of a high standard. Evidence in portfolios is well presented and logically sequenced. Some employers allow trainees time at work to update their logbooks. Most trainees are aware of their progress, and tracking documents are up to date. However, retention rates on all engineering programmes are low, with over 50 per cent of trainees leaving without a qualification during the last three years. Achievement rates are consequently low. Of 158 trainees starting programmes in 1997, 37 per cent left within the first year with no qualifications. By the end of the second year of training, only 11 trainees (seven per cent of starters) had achieved NVQ level 2. Over 80 per cent of leavers however, continue in full employment.

18. Physical resources for training in motor-vehicle and agricultural-plant servicing are poor. Although trainees gain work experience on a wide variety of vehicles, trainees have insufficient opportunity to work on modern vehicles. Workshop space is barely adequate to accommodate the number of trainees in groups, and facilities for storing equipment are poor. Much equipment and learning resources are outdated and do not reflect current industrial standards. In many sessions where trainees are required to share work tasks on the same vehicle, insufficient individual work time is given to trainees. Welding resources are inadequate for the courses being offered.

19. In many cases, trainees' reviews in the workplace take place infrequently. Some trainees have not been visited in the workplace for over nine months. Review visits carried out by the training co-ordinators lack depth and do not focus on NVQ achievement and progression. Review documents are often incomplete, and copies are not left with the trainees. Individual training plans are not updated, and trainees are often unaware of what programme they are on. Many employers

are not involved in trainees' review sessions and are not kept well informed of trainees' progress. Some employers have little knowledge of NVQs and modern apprentice programmes and they make little contribution to training other than providing trainees with job skills. Trainees and employers' awareness and understanding of key skills are poor and key skills are not being developed at work.

Business administration

Grade 3

20. A total of 36 TEC-funded trainees and 16 New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option are following business administration training programmes in accounting, administration and information technology. Of the 18 accounting trainees on programmes leading to NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4, five are following work-based programmes for young people, 12 are modern apprentices and one is a New Deal client. Nineteen trainees are studying business administration, of which 11 trainees are on programmes for young people, three are national trainees, and five are modern apprentices. Fifteen New Deal clients are working towards GNVQ and BTEC first certificates in information technology and/or diplomas in business and office administration. The trainees attend the college on a weekly basis for day-release training sessions. The college's open-learning facilities are used by trainees. Training for five accounting trainees is subcontracted to a company offering distance-learning programmes. In accounting, all trainees are in full employment, whereas in administration, 10 trainees have full employment and nine are placed with employers for work experience. Training co-ordinators review trainees' progress quarterly. Training co-ordinators are not specifically qualified or experienced in business administration.

21. The self-assessment report was comprehensive in its consideration of training. The effectiveness of training was understated, although the impact of highly qualified and occupationally experienced trainers in enabling trainees to learn and achieve was identified. The underdevelopment of key skills training was recognised, although weaknesses within some arrangements for assessment and internal verification were not included in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned and effective training
- ◆ highly qualified and occupationally experienced trainers
- ◆ high NVQ achievement in accountancy
- ◆ effective working relationships between college staff and New Deal clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped key skills

- ◆ some weak assessment practice
- ◆ poor internal verification in administration

22. Training is well planned and effective. Course files for each training programme contain detailed and comprehensive schemes of work. Training plans within schemes of work are well written and clearly identify the learning aims and objectives and resourcing needs for each session. Methods of evaluating the effectiveness of each session are contained in teaching plans. Theory training is given at a pace and level that meets the needs of trainees and sessions are inter-linked to ensure full coverage of all topics. Trainees are provided with copies of schemes of work to raise their awareness of college-based training and allow preparation for theory sessions. College tutors are well qualified professionally, and use their extensive occupational experience to good effect to help trainees learn. In accounting, for example, tutors draw upon their own experience as accountants to provide trainees with real-life examples of work applications to support theoretical knowledge. New Deal clients are well supported in training. Particularly good working relationships with trainers have been identified by New Deal clients as main reasons for their being able to learn and make progress. Trainers give much individual attention to each trainee in identifying trainees' past experiences and prior learning. This knowledge is used effectively to develop training plans which are compatible with trainees' abilities and preferences. Trainees receive guidance in the identification of realistic achievement goals and are well supported in progressing towards full employment.

23. Trainees' achievements in accounting are good. Rates of achievement of NVQs in accounting by leavers have been consistently over 80 per cent for the last three years. NVQ achievements are well above national averages and this is acknowledged by the awarding body. For example, in December 1998, for the NVQ level 4 programme unit 'cost analysis and control', achievement was 81 per cent compared with the national average of 69 per cent. Achievement in administration is satisfactory with 52 per cent of leavers achieving NVQs over the last three years. During this same period, trainees' retention for all business administration programmes has been poor with 44 per cent of recruited trainees leaving before completion of training. Key skills integration with training programmes is, in some cases, poor. For example, in accountancy schemes of work for key skills training and assessment are underdeveloped. Some accountancy trainees have achieved a full NVQ at level 3, but have yet to achieve any key skills qualifications and thereby complete the modern apprenticeship. In business administration, key skills integration with training has begun and, although trainees have awareness of key skills requirements, few trainees have achieved a qualification in key skills.

24. Some assessment practices are weak. In many cases, opportunities for assessment at work are not taken. For example, in accountancy direct observation of trainees at work is infrequent and does not happen systematically. Reliance is placed on using simulated evidence to assess trainees' job skills. Trainers rarely visit trainees at work and systems for formal contact with the employers are

undeveloped. However, in administration new initiatives for monthly assessment of trainees at work have been introduced. Where work-based evidence is contained in trainees' portfolios, it is detailed and well presented. Monitoring by college staff of assessment of 'distance-learning' trainees is not systematic and fails to assure that the range and depth of trainees' theory knowledge is adequate. Internal verification of assessment in administration is poor. Planning of internal verification does not ensure that it is happening at regular intervals throughout training. Often internal verification is delayed until towards the end of training. Internal verification practice does not include routine direct observation of all assessors or systematic sampling of all NVQ units. Written schedules for internal verification are not commonplace and meetings between assessors and internal verifiers are sporadic. In accountancy, however, internal verification practices are good. Meetings between staff to discuss internal verification issues are held regularly. Internal verification adequately covers the range of assessors, sites and course units and the results of internal verification are well recorded.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

25. In October 1999, South Kent College had 24 trainees following hairdressing training, including two New Deal clients. At the time of reinspection, there were 17. Fourteen are modern apprentices, including five at foundation level, and three are on other programmes. All are training at NVQ level 2. All trainees recruited after September 2000 are following a foundation programme leading to an NVQ at level 1. Trainees are encouraged to complete the barbering units as part of their individual training plan. They attend college one day each week for off-the-job training and assessment. Training takes place in a suite of salons in college where a wide range of services including hairdressing, fitness, holistic and beauty therapy services are offered. The facilities include a gymnasium and fitness studio. On-the-job training takes place four days each week at local employers' salons. The college has links with 11 work placements. These are subject to health and safety checks by college staff to ensure their suitability for training purposes. Most trainees are recruited by their employers, employed full time, and referred to the college for training. All members of staff working within the off-the-job environment have relevant training and assessment qualifications.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor understanding of training programmes by employers
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ ineffective target setting
- ◆ weak links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ low retention and achievement

26. At reinspection significant progress had been made in relation to all the weaknesses but three of them remain problematic.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good teamwork by college hairdressing staff
- ◆ frequent communication with employers
- ◆ innovative training initiatives
- ◆ good integration of key skills
- ◆ well-equipped modern salons

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient understanding of training programmes by employers
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ low retention rates

27. College trainers in hairdressing work well together and are responsive to the requirements of training and to the needs of trainees. A team approach has been introduced to the teaching of practical sessions since the first inspection. This enables five tutors to work together during an integrated practical session. Trainees are offered individual support to meet their specific needs while working towards levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing. Trainers promptly offer assistance when trainees request it. Trainers work enthusiastically and co-operatively. They readily and self-critically appraise their standards and implement improvements. Since the first inspection, the department has undergone considerable change. Staff have introduced new procedures to standardise practices in training and assessment. A new training liaison co-ordinator's role has been introduced to build links between the college and the commercial salons.

28. The team has improved its communication with employers. Strong links are being built between the college and the commercial salons. The training liaison co-ordinators have regular meetings and contact with the salons. These co-ordinators review trainees in the salons every 12 weeks. During these meetings, they speak with the employers as well as the trainees. Trainees are now set clearer targets both for hairdressing and key skill units of their NVQs. College staff and the employers check the trainees' attendance more rigorously, and telephone each other frequently. Tutors write reports on trainees' progress five times a year, and send copies to the trainees' employers. Employers welcome this information and are beginning to show a keener interest in the trainees' programme. Employers are invited to visit the college's training facilities. Some employers have agreed to work alongside college tutors to make short specialist presentations to trainees, for example in barbering techniques. A new worklog has been introduced to inform employers of the content of the NVQ programme and the scheme of work. This is given to them at the beginning of the programme when they are encouraged to consider their own on-the-job training sessions. On- and off-the-job training are now more co-ordinated. A number of recent enquiries have been received from employers wishing to return to the college for training.

GOOD PRACTICE

During the various training initiatives organised with local schools, trainees work on young school children as models. Many young children have headlice, and this offers the trainees a rare opportunity to be assessed for the NVQ units which relate to infections and infestations.

29. Trainees are involved in a range of initiatives, which broaden their learning and provide opportunities to assess competencies. Close links have been established with local schools whose pupils complete a wide range of historical projects. Examples of these are the World War Two festival, which included presentations of 1940s hairstyles and fashions, the 'white cliffs experience' addressing Roman times and the Victorian festival. Trainees participate in the completion of hairstyles, make-up and fashion of these eras. Local links with a well-established hairdressing franchise have enabled trainees to attend fashion shows and to become involved with the preparation of the models.

30. Key skills training is well integrated with programmes and daily tasks are used effectively to assess trainees' key skills. Hairdressing trainers demonstrate good knowledge of key skills and a full understanding of its integral place within foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. Specific time is allotted to key skills training and trainees are aware of its importance as a mandatory part of training. Key skills are taught effectively with reference to essential job skills and knowledge in hairdressing. Trainees receive good guidance from staff in the collection of evidence of their competence in key skills and trainees are particularly knowledgeable about key skills.

31. The employers' salons are modern, well resourced and fully meet the requirements of training. College-training facilities are excellent. Salons are spacious and bright, and serviced by a well designed and furnished reception area. Clients visiting the salons move from the reception to a waiting area from where trainees begin their greeting and consultation procedures. The training area is imaginatively decorated to create a lively and stimulating working environment. Good quality products are used within the off-the-job training and a broad range of clients enable trainees to gain access to a variety of assessment opportunities.

32. Although the links with employers have improved since the first inspection, their understanding of the structure and content of training programmes still lacks depth. Many employers do not understand key skills and many think the achievement goal is completing a hairdressing qualification rather than the training programme. Individual training plans are not used to identify trainees' progress and do not show target dates for units of the qualification. Employers do not give sufficient priority to planning trainees' learning at work.

33. Trainees' job skills are not assessed sufficiently at work when they start the programme. Over the past 12 months, consideration has been given to ensuring work-based assessment is more readily available. Employers are more involved in the completion of witness testimonies although key skills evidence is not being gathered. Ten mobile assessors have been made available to plan assessments on demand. Assessment is taking place more regularly but only 20 per cent of assessment is currently carried out in the workplace.

34. The hairdressing staff routinely record achievements, destinations and reasons for trainees leaving programmes early. Data show that both retention and achievement rates have been low over the past three years. Levels of achievement

had declined over a three-year period. In 1998-2000, only one of the eight trainees on youth training completed their programme. All other trainees left this programme early with no qualifications. All five of the modern apprentices at level 2 left their programmes early with no qualifications. Of the five modern apprentices at level 3, only one completed the programme, all the others left with no accreditation for units completed. For 1999-2001, of 10 NVQ level 2 modern apprentices and two other trainees, five left their programme early without qualifications, one has completed the programme and six remain in training.

35. Following the first inspection, changes have been made to the procedures for work-based training. Stricter criteria are used to assess trainees' appropriateness for the programmes and not all applicants are successful. The trainees' progress review meetings are now arranged with occupational specialists and the curriculum division has introduced hairdressing at level 1 for all new trainees as a foundation programme. The college now offers unit accreditation as part of the programme. Trainees have completed written assignments and some units more rapidly than in previous years. Although it is too early to measure the full impact of these changes, trainees' motivation is high and the retention rate is improving. Of the 11 modern apprentices who started in September 2000, nine remain on the programme after the first college term. This is a considerable improvement on previous years.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

36. There are 53 TEC-funded youth trainees and four New Deal clients in this programme area. Training leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 is offered in care and in early years care and education, and programmes include modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and work-based programmes for young people. Training in care has 46 trainees, of whom 35 are modern apprentices, one is a national trainee, two are on New Deal and eight are following other work-based training. In childcare, five are modern apprentices, two are on New Deal and four trainees are on other work-based training. Three-quarters of all trainees are in full employment at one of 26 different locations presently used for on-the-job training. Care trainees are employed in hospitals, and residential and day-care centres providing services for elderly people and adults with learning disabilities. Childcare trainees are employed in day nurseries or schools. All trainees in care work shift systems, but only those aged eighteen or over work night shifts, and then only under supervision of a qualified member of staff. Those in childcare work during the daytime only.

37. All assessment and training is managed through the South Kent College assessment centre. For care, there are twelve qualified internal verifiers providing support to nearly 300 employers and work supervisors registered as work-based assessors. In early years care and education, three internal verifiers support 35 work-based and visiting assessors. All trainees attend college for off-the-job theory training, either one day a week for scheduled sessions or through an open-learning system of one day a month at college supplemented by additional learning support

material. College staff carry out and/or co-ordinate all work-based assessment and key skills training.

38. The self-assessment report failed to recognise many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The report, however, identified good tracking systems for trainees' progress as a strength, and weaknesses in assessment practices and the underdevelopment of key skills. The quality of off-the-job training and strong internal verification were not identified. Poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and the slow achievement of modern apprenticeships were not mentioned. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ extensive range of work placements
- ◆ good-quality work in well-organised portfolios
- ◆ strong and effective system of internal verification
- ◆ good support by college staff for work-based assessors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ inadequate integration of key skills with occupational training
- ◆ unsystematic updating of individual training plans
- ◆ slow progress towards achievement of modern apprenticeships
- ◆ infrequency of assessment in the workplace

GOOD PRACTICE

Distance-learning programmes are being developed by college tutors to facilitate learning. A comprehensive set of materials for five units of the level 2 and 3 NVQs in care have already been produced, and tutors are currently working with another local college to create distance-learning materials on health and safety in care for delivery over the college's intranet.

39. College-based training is well planned and effectively enables trainees to learn and acquire occupational skills. Schemes of work are well written and training sessions adequately cover all aspects of the NVQ programmes. Trainers provide information clearly and trainees are generally well supported in their learning. NVQ level 3 training schemes incorporate selected course units appropriate to the needs of individual trainees. The two-year duration of training programmes, however, does not take adequate account of the needs of all individual trainees. Trainees' rates of progression are determined by training schedules rather than by their individual ability, and do not provide adequate opportunity for highly able and more experienced trainees to complete training in less time. In many cases, on-the-job training occurs incidentally rather than to written schemes. However, trainees possess good understanding of the requirements of the job and display practical competence when completing tasks at work. The college has developed an extensive register of 149 employers and work-placement providers offering trainees a wide choice of working environments. Trainees are well supervised at work and given ample opportunity to acquire job skills. Co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training, however, is weak. Some employers expressed concern over inadequate dissemination by college staff of information about training and

trainees' progress. Communication between employers and the college is not systematic and, in some cases, is infrequent. Many employers are unaware of the content and structure of theory training sessions at the college.

40. Trainees' work contained within their portfolios is of good quality. Written evidence of trainees' acquired occupational competencies is well organised and each piece of evidence is referenced to specific job skills and vocational knowledge. Review of trainees' progress by training co-ordinators, however, is weak and standard procedures are not employed. Marked variation occurs in the frequency of reviews and the depth and detail of recorded outcomes of meetings with trainees. For some trainees, the infrequency of reviews has not enabled staff to provide them with adequate levels of support and guidance. In many cases, the setting and monitoring of achievement targets for trainees are poor. Monthly meetings between the Skills Training co-ordinator and course tutors are held to discuss training issues and trainees' progress. Some trainees' files, however, contain few up-to-date records of reviews for use in evaluating their progress. Amendment of individual training plans to reflect trainees' achievement and progression is not routine. The college has developed computer software which is used effectively to track trainees' completion of course units.

41. Support for work-based assessors by college internal verifiers is effective. Group meetings between care assessors and internal verifiers are held regularly and attendance is viewed by the college as essential for the maintenance of good standards in assessment. Assessors expressed satisfaction with the level and quality of support given to them by college staff. In childcare, weekly 'drop-in' workshops for assessors and trainees are run by internal verifiers. Workshops are effective in guiding and supporting assessors in all matters relating to assessment. The college has well-established arrangements for internal verification. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluating internal verification is undertaken by a college committee and the quality of completed assessment of work-based trainees is assured by college-wide internal verification systems. Assessed work is systematically sampled and assessors receive written and detailed feedback on the quality of assessment. In many cases, however, work-based assessment is poorly planned and occurs at irregular intervals. In childcare, where a significant proportion of work-based assessment is conducted by visiting assessors, opportunities for using naturally occurring evidence in the workplace are missed owing to the infrequency of visits. Generally, the frequency of work-based assessment is insufficient to support trainees in meeting their achievement targets. In childcare, for example, most assessment is conducted towards the end of training, rather than when trainees are ready to be assessed.

42. Integration of key skills training with work schemes is not yet fully achieved. Initiatives to introduce key skills into training have been taken, but many trainees following modern apprenticeships and national traineeships have yet to achieve key skills training. In many cases, trainees and employers have little awareness of key skills requirements. Trainees' achievement of NVQs is satisfactory. For those leaving other training programmes for young people, 23 per cent achieved a level 2 NVQ in 1997-98 and 47 per cent in 1998-99. For modern apprentices, in 1997-98

and 1998-99, 72 per cent and 60 per cent of leavers, respectively, achieved an NVQ and all leavers continued in full employment. Trainees' progression towards the achievement of full modern apprenticeships is slow. Completion of modern apprenticeships does not match the achievement of level 3 NVQs, however. In the last two years, only 10 per cent of modern apprentices have completed the full programme, although over the same period 58 per cent of leavers achieved a level 3 NVQ. In many cases, trainees left training without meeting training programme requirements for key skills. Some trainees express concern about the slowness of their progress and the infrequency of assessment.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

43. Skills Training offers prevocational training for long-term unemployed adults. Training is largely given at an annexe of the college which is a mile from the college site in Folkestone. There are 94 trainees on the programme. New programmes start at two-week intervals with approximately 10 trainees per group. Programmes aim to provide employment skills through raising trainees' confidence and independence, improving basic skills and offering work experience. Training lasts up to six months and includes a mandatory element called STEPS which focuses on raising trainees' self-esteem and building their confidence. Trainees are referred for training by the Employment Service. All prospective trainees undergo induction and are diagnostically tested for basic skills to identify possible additional support needs. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out weekly for those trainees attending the centre. Apart from providing basic skills support, programmes include elements such as job 'tasters', employment placements, careers guidance and job-search activities. Trainees are offered training which leads to the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications including health and safety certificates, first-aid at work, adult basic education certificates, NVQ level 1 in using information technology and units of wordpower and numberpower.

44. Many of the judgements made in the self-assessment report referred to the administrative aspects of training. Apart from identifying the wide range of training opportunities, other strengths identified by inspectors were not included in the self-assessment report. The high quality of off-the-job training and the levels of support for trainees were not sufficiently emphasised. The college did identify the low progression of trainees into employment as a weakness. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction and introductory training
- ◆ high-quality training
- ◆ excellent work-experience opportunities
- ◆ good achievement of awards by trainees
- ◆ effective links between college staff and outside organisations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor progression into employment
- ◆ unplanned guidance for trainees on completing training
- ◆ inadequate training facilities

GOOD PRACTICE

Skills Training's staff involved with the foundation for work programme are addressing the problems associated with trainees' progression into employment and have, as part of their initiative, sent out 1,400 letters to prospective employers asking if they would be interested in supporting the programme by offering work experience or 'tasters'. Over 400 replies were received of which approximately 250 were positive. Staff are currently contacting these employers to identify whether the prospective placements would be relevant to trainees. Some contacts have been passed to other departments within the college. All records of contacts are carefully recorded.

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees are given the opportunity to take a safety certificate designed for those who are working in the proximity of railway lines. This training course is a requirement for a variety of local trades and the course is being presented by a leading contractor who wishes to recruit up to 100 employees. This initiative is organised by Skills Training's staff.

45. Induction training is thorough and staff give trainees comprehensive information on training opportunities. All trainees have a lengthy one-to-one interview at which they are given ample opportunity to discuss possible training options to improve their chances of achieving full employment. At interview, trainees are given impartial advice and clear guidance which enables them to make informed decisions on their training paths and achievement objectives. Trainees expressed satisfaction with the four-week introductory training programme, which includes the one-week STEPS course and guidance sessions to develop trainees' job-search skills. Many trainees feel that through completion of induction and the STEPS course, their self-esteem has increased and that they have gained sufficient confidence to progress to the full prevocational training programme. Usually, new groups of trainees remain together during their introductory period and staff are effective in establishing teamworking and mutual support between group members. Trainees appreciate the support and encouragement of colleagues and benefit from being able to learn from other people's experiences during group sessions.

46. Training at the centre is of a high standard and trainers use their experience and teaching skills effectively to enable trainees to learn. Staff are appropriately qualified in teaching adults and people with learning difficulties, and display dedication in helping disadvantaged people to achieve and make progress. Training sessions are well organised and make effective use of learning materials. Trainees enjoy attending sessions and contribute fully to group activities. Trainees display enthusiasm for training and talk openly of their progress and achievements. Training conforms to individual participation plans which are negotiated with trainees at the start of training and identify achievement goals. Each trainee's plan is updated and amended by staff as elements of the training plan are completed. Some trainees, however, are unclear about the content of the individual participation plan and its use in guiding training. Trainees feel well supported by Skills Training's staff and trainees not on work placement meet weekly with the project supervisor to review progress. Trainees engaged in work experience with employers are reviewed monthly, and Skills Training's staff make weekly telephone contact with employers to monitor trainees' progress. Review sessions are well conducted and trainees are fully involved in appraising their progress. Recording the outcomes of reviews is systematic, although the amount of detail contained in trainees' records varies. In some cases, records provide little information on trainees' achievements and do not include clearly identified targets for further achievement.

47. Training offers good opportunities for trainees to achieve nationally recognised awards. Trainees are well advised by staff of these opportunities and encouraged to participate, especially in cases where achievement will enhance their chances of future employment. Most trainees undertake training leading to

awards, although no pressure is exerted on them by staff to do so. Trainees' achievement of awards is high. For example, of 167 trainees who started the NVQ level 1 in using information technology during the period July 1998 to August 1999, 52 per cent have achieved the full award, 35 per cent are still taking it and only 14 per cent have failed to achieve. Twenty-three out of 26 trainees who started training for the basic food hygiene certificate in this period achieved their qualification. Since April 1999, of 136 starters, 43 have achieved first-aid certificates, 23 have achieved full awards for foundation training and a further 19 have partially achieved this award and are still taking it. Training for foundation awards gives trainees experience in compiling portfolios of completed work and prepares them well for possible progression to NVQ programmes. Work assignments undertaken by trainees are carefully chosen to complement career preferences and personal interests, and thereby stimulate trainees' interest, and encourage them to succeed. Retention for the current year is good at 82 per cent.

48. Trainees have excellent opportunities to work with local employers offering work experience suited to the needs and preferences of trainees. Since April 1999, of 136 trainees commencing prevocational training, 64 have participated in work experience. For those trainees undecided on their preferred areas of work, and for trainees lacking in confidence, short work 'tasters' are arranged. Trainees are highly supervised and supported by college staff and employers in work placements. Some trainees gain work experience through involvement in college-managed projects, including a college-owned commercial horticulture site at Dover, and general building maintenance work at local community centres. Trainees enjoy project work and value the experience gained by participation. Many trainees testify to their improved interpersonal skills, acquisition of vocational skills and sense of achievement. Work placements are used primarily to provide work experience and do not provide evidence of job skills linked to the achievement of vocational qualifications. Progression of trainees into full employment is poor. Since April 1999, of 136 people starting training, only 10 per cent have moved into employment and four per cent have progressed to other college courses.

49. Support and guidance for trainees at the start and during training is good. However, support for trainees approaching the end of training is not planned and occurs incidentally in response to needs identified by trainees. Job-search activities and job preparation are undertaken at the beginning of programmes, but similar support is not systematically provided towards the end of training. Facilities and resources at the training centre are inadequate. For example, the availability of computer stations is insufficient to satisfy the demands of trainees and some computer software is not up-to-date. Social facilities for trainees are poor and barely meet trainees' needs. Access to classrooms at the centre is difficult for people in wheelchairs and there are no accessible lavatories. The hatted classroom used for prevocational training at the main college site in Folkestone is poorly equipped and in need of redecoration, and does not afford a stimulating learning environment. Skills Training's staff maintain good links with outside agencies and organisations. Co-operative working relationships have been established with staff at the Employment Service, job centres and the TEC. College staff are effective in

providing accurate information on training to staff at the job centre. Observation of college training by the job centre's staff and the TEC training co-ordinator has increased their knowledge of prevocational training and enabled them to give more accurate advice to prospective trainees. College representatives meet regularly with the Employment Service's district liaison officer to discuss training issues.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

50. The college has a written equal opportunities policy which is detailed and comprehensive and meets the requirements of legislation and the contractual requirements of training agreements. All students and work-based trainees are issued with a copy of the college diary which contains the equal opportunities policy statement, disability statement and complaints procedures. The equal opportunities policy statement is also contained in the handbook of information given to trainees and staff. The policy, although not written specifically for work-based training, embraces all college activities. Responsibility for equal opportunities in the college lies at senior level with the college vice-principal. Responsibility for the daily monitoring and implementation of equal opportunities falls to the college equal opportunities officer. The equal opportunities officer liaises closely with the college management team in the review of policies and procedures and the development of equal opportunities strategies. A policy group, chaired by the vice-principal, meets regularly to discuss policy issues. The knowledge and expertise of staff in the personnel unit are used in the drafting of policies, procedures and job descriptions to ensure compliance with statutory requirements of equality of opportunity. Adequate attention is also paid to equal opportunities issues when producing promotional material. TEC-funded trainees are monitored at recruitment for gender, ethnicity and disability, as required by the TEC, and data are analysed to monitor trends. Four per cent of college students, including work-based trainees, are from minority ethnic groups, compared to a 1 per cent representation in the county's population. Discussion of equal opportunities and the implications of the college's policy are carried out during induction of new staff and trainees.

51. The self-assessment report largely focused on campus-based provision. However, consideration of equal opportunities is comprehensive and inspectors agreed with the strengths identified. Some weaknesses identified by self-assessment, for example, insufficient staff training, had been addressed by the time of inspection. Weaknesses relating to promoting and monitoring equal opportunities in the workplace are understated in the report. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and responsive commitment to equality of opportunity
- ◆ strong anti-harassment and bullying policy and investigation procedure
- ◆ good provision of staff training for equal opportunities
- ◆ positive action in recruitment to challenge gender stereotyping
- ◆ resources and equipment to support trainees with disabilities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no audits of equal opportunities in new workplaces
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ inadequate promotion of equal opportunities policies in the workplace

52. The college equal opportunities policy is clearly written and includes a descriptive account of equality issues such as discrimination. Most staff have a good awareness of the policy and sufficient understanding of the issues addressed within it to ensure effective equality of opportunity for staff and trainees. Trainees possess some understanding of equality of opportunity and remember discussing such issues during induction. Although their awareness of specific provisions made by the policy is low, trainees feel comfortable with the college's stance on equal opportunities and feel well protected against discrimination and unfair practice. Trainees' awareness of equal opportunities at work varies, but some trainees had a good knowledge of employers' arrangements to ensure fair working practices. Induction programmes for trainees include consideration of examples of direct and indirect discrimination related to working environments. Trainees' rights and responsibilities and the college's expectations of trainees' behaviour are covered in induction. New Deal trainees receive a thorough briefing on equal opportunities, especially in relation to job applications and interviews. College policies and strategic plans contain a clearly written commitment to promoting the college as an equal opportunities organisation. Equality of opportunity for all people associated with the college is strongly supported by staff and strategies for the promotion of equal opportunities are effective. Management strategies include raising awareness of equal opportunities issues through staff development and training programmes. In-house staff training has been supplemented by attendance at training events organised by the TEC. Support for equal opportunities by the college is demonstrated through marketing policies and the inclusion of equal opportunities statements on advertising materials, including job advertisements. The college strongly promotes its positive approach towards people with disabilities. Prospective staff and trainees with disabilities are given comprehensive information of college facilities and support services through the college's disability statement.

53. Written policies for dealing with trainees' grievances and complaints are detailed and effective. Copies of written procedures for addressing trainees' complaints are given to all staff, and trainees have good awareness of these procedures. Complaints and action taken are monitored by the equal opportunities

officer and all complaints are reviewed by senior managers. Information on equal opportunities issues is systematically fed to college governors. College intolerance of harassment and bullying of trainees is strongly stated within the anti-harassment and bullying policy. Trainees on off-the-job training receive high levels of protection from unfair treatment through effective application of this policy. Designated staff have received appropriate training in dealing promptly and effectively with complaints from staff and trainees. The college has implemented initiatives to change gender imbalance in occupational areas where recruitment shows traditional gender stereotyping. In construction, for example, initiatives of staff in the brickwork department have received the support of the equal opportunities officer to develop strategies and practices to attract, recruit and retain young women on programmes dominated by men. A number of specific courses have been established to attract women into the construction department, including interior design and painting and decorating. The initiative has met with full staff support and successfully recruited women into the building industry.

54. The college is well resourced and equipped to support trainees with disabilities and learning difficulties. Support services are well promoted and used effectively to make training accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, experiences and disadvantages. Good use is made of modern computer technology to support trainees' learning. Successful completion of college-based training for people with learning difficulties is enabled through the use of specialist support staff. The effectiveness of college-based support systems, however, does not extend to training at work and evaluation of trainees' support needs in the workplace is not systematic. Generally, users of wheelchairs have good access to college-based facilities, including teaching areas, support services and social and recreational facilities. Building strategies incorporate plans to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

55. The implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities policies are effective for college-based training, but far less effective for training in the workplace where most trainees spend the majority of their time. Present arrangements do not ensure equality of opportunity for trainees at work. Initial auditing of employers' arrangements for equal opportunities is not systematic. In many cases, initial assessment of employers' policies and procedures for ensuring equal opportunities is not conducted prior to placing a trainee in employment or accepting employed trainees for training. Progressive monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is neither systematic nor routine. Evaluation of the effectiveness of college equal opportunities policies relies heavily on incidental evidence gathered by training co-ordinators during trainees' reviews and completion of six-monthly feedback questionnaires by employers and trainees. Analysed data, however, has not been fully evaluated or used to develop action plans. Generally, promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace by college staff is insufficient to ensure equality of opportunity for trainees. College systems assuring equality of opportunity do not fully extend to employers' premises. Appropriate action to ensure that employers implement policies meeting statutory requirements for equal opportunities is not always effective. Written agreements between the college and employers stress the mandatory provision of equal

opportunities and include the college's policy. However, some employers have little awareness of equal opportunities and place low priority on its effective implementation.

Trainee support

Grade 3

56. All work-based trainees are registered students of the college and are given full entitlement to all support services, including initial assessment, learning support, careers guidance, personal counselling and specialist advice. Written college policies, such as those for equal opportunities and health and safety, extend to cover work-based training. All employers' premises are subject to an initial health and safety inspection and subsequently to systematic and frequent monitoring by appropriately qualified college staff. Guidance units providing support services are available at each campus and offer facilities for work-based trainees and New Deal clients to seek advice specific to training and to receive support in personal matters. Skills Training's staff also engage the services of outside agencies and funding bodies to supplement college support services. Trainees are mainly recruited either by referral from the careers service or Employment Service, or from three local schools. Levels of advice and guidance received by trainees before referral for training vary. Some trainees, including those referred by the careers service, may have received advice, guidance and initial assessment for support needs, before referral. However, all new trainees are systematically interviewed by Skills Training's training co-ordinators and given information and impartial advice on training choices. There are initial assessments of trainees' basic skills and key skills, and accreditation of prior learning, although procedures for this are not standardised. Trainees are given an induction to their training, and the various elements of this induction are provided independently by different staff. Training contracts require trainees' progress to be reviewed at least three-monthly. Reviewing trainees' progress is the responsibility of Skills Training's training co-ordinators. Each trainee has a nominated training co-ordinator to act as the first point of contact for support.

57. Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that it understated the significant role played by employers' in the support of trainees at work. The report highlighted inadequacies in induction and initial assessment and identified weaknesses in reviewing trainees' progress. The self-assessment report cited the regular updating of information in trainees' files as a strength, but inspectors regarded this as no more than normal practice. Absence of systematic support for trainees at work resulted in inspectors awarding a grade lower than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive college tutoring system
- ◆ excellent specialist support services in college
- ◆ good integration of learning support with college training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poorly co-ordinated induction and initial assessment
- ◆ inadequate review of trainees' progress in some programme areas
- ◆ unsystematic support for trainees at work by college staff
- ◆ lack of routine updating of trainees' files

58. The college has a comprehensively written policy for tutoring which is supplemented with a detailed tutorial information pack for tutors and trainers. Clear procedural guidance on providing support to trainees is given to staff and staff responsibilities for trainee support are clearly defined. Tutorials with occupational staff from the college are timetabled and scheduled to meet the availability of trainees. Sessions offer a good opportunity for trainees to discuss their training with tutors and receive any necessary help and guidance in overcoming problems experienced in learning. The college offers excellent specialist support services where trainees are able to receive help from experienced staff, qualified in providing guidance and counselling services. Staff are sympathetic and sensitive to trainees' needs and are able to provide support over a wide range of training issues and personal matters. Information on college support services is given in the student handbook, copies of which are issued to all trainees during induction. The college's own evaluation of support arrangements for students highlighted the weaknesses inherent in offering learning support as a separate, specialist provision. The college has introduced new initiatives to overcome factors such as 'special needs stigma', which makes students reluctant to seek and use learning support. The college has employed extra learning-support staff to work alongside tutors in classrooms and workshops during teaching sessions to make learning support more accessible and a more usual part of the learning environment. This integration of learning support with training has enabled trainees with learning difficulties to overcome barriers to learning and progress.

POOR PRACTICE

Systems do not ensure adequate frequency in the conduction of trainees' reviews. In plumbing, for example, two trainees had not been reviewed by the training co-ordinator for 10 months and 13 months, respectively. In business administration, intervals of 11 months between trainees' reviews have occurred and in care, two trainees have not been reviewed during the last 12 months.

59. Applicants for training are routinely interviewed and given comprehensive, impartial advice by Skills Training's staff. Most new trainees are assessed using standard diagnostic tests to establish trainees' learning support needs. The use of accreditation of prior learning is effective for motor-vehicle trainees, although its use is less effective in other occupational areas. In some programmes, for example engineering and prevocational training, induction is thorough and provides trainees with a good awareness of training and college support systems. Procedures for the induction of new trainees and the initial assessment of their basic skills are, however, not clearly written, and practices are not standardised. Co-ordination of induction and initial assessment is poor. Generally, trainees' support needs are being met. However, in some cases, initial assessments have not been sufficiently comprehensive to give accurate guidance on appropriate choices for training or to clearly identify learning support needs. Some trainees' initial assessments have been repeated. Results of initial assessments are not always communicated to teaching staff. Different aspects of trainees' induction are carried out by different staff at different times. For example, induction at college and induction at work are separate. There is no systematic linking of these induction sessions. The college

fails to communicate clearly essential information about the induction process and some trainees and employers are uncertain about the aims of induction.

60. The quality of trainees' progress reviews is variable and, in some cases, inadequate. Responsibility for visiting trainees at college and at work lies with Skills Training's training co-ordinators. Trainees on prevocational programmes receive monthly reviews at work and the results of these reviews are routinely recorded. However, in many cases, reviews are too infrequent to meet the contractual requirements of the TEC. Training co-ordinators place too much reliance on making informal contact with trainees while they are attending training at college. Some trainees have not been visited in the workplace for over nine months. Generally, trainees' reviews are poorly planned. Results of reviews are often not recorded in detail and fail to include clearly identified targets for trainees' achievement. Employers have little involvement in reviews, and employers and trainees are not given copies of the reviews for reference and use in guiding on-the-job training. The support given by employers to trainees at work, however, is good.

61. Generally, employers encourage trainees to succeed and provide levels of supervision appropriate to trainees' needs. In construction, strong partnerships between college staff and employers provides good support for trainees at work, and in hairdressing, college staff and employers are responsive to the needs of trainees. Prevocational trainees are highly supervised at work by employers and college staff. On-the-job training, although often incidental rather than planned, is effective. Trainees are given good instruction during work tasks and employers impart their knowledge to give trainees understanding of job requirements.

62. The support college staff provide for trainees in the workplace is not systematic, however, and relies upon the initiative of individual staff. In many cases, communication between college staff and employers is infrequent. College reports on trainees' off-the-job training and progress are not routinely sent to employers. Visits by the college's teaching staff to trainees at work are not formally planned, and in some cases do not happen. Some on- and off-the-job training is poorly co-ordinated and theory training is not synchronised with tasks performed at work. Some employers are not fully aware of the requirements of NVQs and are not always able to provide adequate levels of systematic on-the-job support. Information held in trainees' files is not routinely updated. With the exception of individual training plans in prevocational programmes, the information in many files is incomplete, and does not identify changes in individual training plans or detail trainees' achievements and progress. Results of initial assessments and recommendations for additional learning support are not systematically recorded, and there is no systematic use of individual training plans to guide trainees.

Management of training

Grade 3

63. The head of the commercial and contract services division of the college manages the TEC contracts for work-based training. He also has other responsibilities, which include gaining work experience placements for other students at the college, and managing trans-national and other projects funded through European funds. He reports to the director of business and training, who reports to the principal. The TEC-funded part of his work is known as the training services unit. A manager leads this unit, which has a team of 17 staff, including nine who work exclusively on the adult training programmes. In each academic division of the college, a training liaison co-ordinator is responsible for reviewing trainees' progress, liaising with employers, and communicating with staff in the training services unit. The training liaison co-ordinator posts were created in 2000. The head of the commercial and contract services meets with the heads of the other divisions fortnightly.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poorly defined service level agreements for work-based training
- ◆ inappropriate deployment of training co-ordinators
- ◆ weak use of staff appraisal to evaluate performance
- ◆ poor management of on-the-job training

64. After the first inspection, the senior managers decided to re-examine all aspects of the management of work-based training within the college. Heads of division now have a greater understanding of the main principles and purpose of work based training. The senior managers restructured the roles and reporting lines of the training liaison co-ordinators. Now each one has a specific occupational specialism. They are now part of a college academic division, rather than the training services unit, as formerly.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ fully integrated training with college strategy and operations
- ◆ well-defined staff roles and responsibilities
- ◆ good staff development systems

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient planning of on-the-job training
- ◆ slow implementation of improvements

65. Managers and staff have reinforced the strengths that were identified at the first inspection, and work-based training is now fully integrated in the college's strategic plan and development. After the first inspection, the head of the commercial and contracts division drafted proposals for change, for consideration by the senior management team. All senior managers were told via well-planned

training sessions, about all aspects of work-based training. TEC staff led some of these training sessions. Divisional managers now understand work-based training, and how the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes differ from the learning programmes taken by other employed students who attend day-release classes. They understand the main terms of the TEC contract. When they plan developments in their divisions, they now consider the interests of work-based learners. The head of the commercial and contracts division reinforces the importance of work based training at the fortnightly meetings of the heads of divisions.

66. As a result of the first inspection, which identified confusion between the responsibilities of teaching staff and the reviewing staff, a revised agreement has been drafted. This specifies the precise responsibilities of each of the staff. It also outlines the college's contractual requirements for monitoring trainees' attendance, reviewing their progress and assessing their competence. The managers re-appraised the role of the reviewing staff, known as training liaison co-ordinators. They now ensure that the reviewing staff are familiar with and skilled in the trainees' occupational area. They now report to the head of division in their occupational area, rather than the training services manager. New staff were appointed in the summer of 2000. The staff who had formerly reviewed trainees, and liaised with employers, had done so irrespective of their own occupational specialism or background. These two staff were given clear and specific responsibilities for health and safety and equal opportunities, and other duties, including checking that training co-ordinators conducted their reviews on time. All staff are clear about each other's roles. The frequent and regular meetings of the training liaison co-ordinators, which are chaired by the training services unit's manager, ensure that solutions can be readily found in the event of any confusion.

67. Initial induction of staff operates at a divisional level and introduces new staff to systems and procedures specific to their jobs. This is backed by college induction training days and covers personnel policies and general college issues. Systematic identification and addressing of staff development needs are effective. Clearly written policies for training and development of staff are standard across the college. All staff receive staff training needs analysis questionnaire annually and are interviewed by senior managers. Individual training needs are recorded and used to develop a college staff training programme of events and workshops. Such events are well advertised for staff participation. The training needs of staff in the training services unit are identified by the head of the division, through the annual appraisal process. A detailed training plan for the newly appointed training liaison co-ordinators has been developed. This ensures their understanding of all facets of work-based training. Participation in professional development and training for individual staff is encouraged by the college. Staff feel well supported and satisfied that their professional development needs are met.

68. Training liaison co-ordinators have now visited all the trainees at their workplaces. In most cases, they have just made one visit. At these visits they have learnt about the trainees' working environment, about the precise nature of the employers' business, and have begun to develop a working relationship with the

trainees' supervisors and employers. They have not yet discussed with the employers the details of the trainees' learning objectives, have not identified from employers or trainees their areas of strength or weakness, have not updated trainees' training plans or set them objectives. They have not informed the trainees' on-the-job learning plan, or helped employers plan the training of their apprentices.

69. The college has been slow to implement improvements. The new training liaison posts were not advertised until five months after the first inspection. By the time the newly appointed staff had been recruited, trained and were ready to visit their trainees at work, virtually a year had passed. The first inspection team, and, subsequently, TEC auditors, identified that some trainees were being reviewed too infrequently. In some areas, many trainees are still reviewed infrequently at work.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

70. External audit reports indicate that the college's quality assurance arrangements comply with the contractual requirements of the TEC and that standards for assessment and internal verification meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. Written policies and comprehensive procedures for quality assurance are contained in a staff handbook which is issued to all staff. The college's quality assurance policy outlines its commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. Responsibility for quality assurance lies at senior management level with the vice-principal who chairs the college's quality committee. This committee reports directly to the principal and the board of governors and is responsible for advising college staff on quality assurance and self-assessment. A self-assessment report covering all college activity is produced annually. The college's quality assurance strategies include self-assessment, target setting, use of feedback questionnaires and data analysis. Since the first inspection, the college has reviewed and revised all its procedures for work-based training. Each college division providing training services has a copy of these. Teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated systematically in all curriculum areas.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ failure of quality assurance procedure to ensure quality of on-the-job training
- ◆ inconsistent implementation of quality assurance systems across occupational areas
- ◆ failure of monitoring and evaluation to lead to continuous improvement in training

71. The college has now implemented checking systems to ensure consistency across occupational areas. Managers analyse data regarding trainees' achievement and retention much more thoroughly than before. They are beginning to use this information to guide improvements, particularly in the areas where trainees form a

substantial minority of learners.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and relevant quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ effective surveys of employers' perceptions of training
- ◆ systematic use of self-assessment
- ◆ good arrangements for continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of impact of quality assurance arrangements on quality of on-the-job learning
- ◆ some missed opportunities to share good practice
- ◆ lack of impact on achievement and retention rates

GOOD PRACTICE

Two staff check that training co-ordinators review their trainees on time. If they do not receive the report on time, they e-mail the relevant co-ordinator. If they have no response within five days, they report the situation to their manager, who takes the issue up with the co-ordinator's head of division. This good practice contributes to more timely reviews, without necessitating too much management time.

72. The college has clearly written quality assurance policies and procedures. These have been reviewed within the past year. Many have been revised, and amended. They are relevant to work-based trainees. The procedures regarding the recruitment, selection, initial assessment, induction, training, assessment and reviewing of trainees are clearly set out, and include flow diagrams. These are issued to all relevant staff. All teaching staff know how frequently trainees should be reviewed, how the review should be reported and where the report should be filed. All staff have a quality assurance handbook. The college charter and learning agreements issued to all trainees clearly detail trainees' rights and responsibilities and set standards for college services. College policies including, for example, health and safety, equal opportunities and staff development, are reviewed annually by the college's governing body.

73. Effective systems for generating feedback data from employers have been established. Questionnaires gathering information on employers' perceptions of training and satisfaction with the college's services are issued six-monthly. The questionnaires are comprehensive and provide a good resource for analysis. Findings of questionnaires are evaluated by the training services unit's managers and reported by way of the college's quality assurance self-assessment committee to the principal. Concerns expressed by employers are disseminated to appropriate curriculum division staff and training co-ordinators for action. Staff are required to provide to the committee written evaluative responses on the effectiveness of action taken. Feedback from work-based trainees receiving off-the-job training in college curriculum divisions is gathered through the student-perception questionnaires. These are issued at the start, mid-point and end of each academic year.

74. The college has a thorough and comprehensive self-assessment process. Different aspects of this take place on an annual cycle. Each division now

GOOD PRACTICE

An established system for classroom observation of teaching and learning is a key part of the college's strategy to achieve quality through continuous improvement. All teaching staff are observed by trained observers each year. Clear guidelines for observers are contained in a handbook for the observation of teaching and learning.

specifically takes account of work-based training when preparing its section of the self-assessment report.

75. Quality assurance arrangements have not yet had a significant impact on how well trainees are trained in their workplaces. Procedures are now in place for the effective control of on-the-job training. These are well designed, but recently established. A few employers have designed clear training programmes for their trainees, and have linked these to their off-the-job training. In one case, the employer has planned aspects of key skills training in the workplace. Training co-ordinators have not shared this good practice with each other, or with other employers. Many employers are interested in what the trainees learn at college. Most co-ordinators have not given trainees' supervisors a timetable outlining when different topics will be covered in off-the-job training.

76. College staff now evaluate the retention and achievement rates of trainees much more closely. They now know the levels of retention and achievement. They do not yet know why many trainees leave early, or whether there are significant trends regarding when they leave. In most occupational areas, retention and achievement rates have not improved since the first inspection.