



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 2000

Seleta

SUMMARY

Seleta offers satisfactory training in engineering and business administration. In engineering, trainees' portfolios are of a high standard. Some trainees and employers have a poor understanding of the NVQ process and key skills are introduced at a late stage in the programme. In business administration, there is good training in information technology and effective key skills training. The training facilities and resources are good. Portfolios are of a poor standard and there is some poor assessment practice. Seleta makes good use of positive role models for trainees and staff to promote equal opportunities and attract trainees from under-represented groups. Induction and progress reviews are not used to record awareness of equal opportunities. Support for trainees is good. Their achievements are regularly celebrated and trainees have access to a wide range of additional opportunities for learning. However, individual learning plans are not used as working documents. Management of training is satisfactory, with good business-planning and a well-planned staff-development programme. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, with effective monitoring of off-the-job learning at Seleta's premises. Seleta effectively analyses trainees' feedback, but many of its quality assurance procedures are incomplete or are not recorded.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Business administration	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ wide range of additional qualifications achieved in engineering
- ♦ good achievement rates in information technology
- ♦ good equal opportunities practices
- ♦ good access to additional learning for all trainees

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ♦ low retention rates on engineering modern apprenticeship programmes
- ♦ shortage of good work placements in business administration
- ♦ ineffective sharing of good practice

INTRODUCTION

1. Seleta was established in 1968 as the South East London Training Group, supported by the engineering industry's national training organisation. The company has been providing government-funded training for 15 years, mostly within the occupational areas of engineering and business administration. Seleta operates from two sites in South London, at Blackheath and Croydon. The Blackheath site operates as the head office, providing many of the support services for engineering. The Croydon site comprises of an information-technology training centre and provides training in information technology and business administration. At the time of inspection, there were 65 trainees in engineering and 51 in business administration. Seleta also offers commercial training in areas such as fork-lift truck driving.

2. Seleta contracts with SOLOTEC, the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Business Link, to provide foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and other work-based learning programmes leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Seleta attracts trainees from South London, mainly from the boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich and Lewisham. These boroughs differ widely from the other South London boroughs, having lower rates of educational attainment, higher proportions of their populations from minority ethnic groups and higher unemployment rates. In Croydon, approximately 18 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups. In Greenwich, the proportion is approximately 13 per cent and in Lewisham 22 per cent. Eighty-five per cent of companies within the area employ fewer than 25 staff.

3. The unemployment rates in Croydon, Greenwich and Lewisham are 3.9 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 3.4 per cent for October 2000. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Croydon, was 42.6 per cent, in Greenwich 32.4 per cent, and in Lewisham 34.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Seleta produced its self-assessment report in September 2000. It was produced by a director, using input from staff meetings. Of the six grades awarded by inspectors, one was the same as that given in the self-assessment report, one was higher and four were lower.

5. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 18 days at Seleta during December 2000. Inspectors examined documents held by the company and the awarding body. They met staff from both the Blackheath and Croydon sites and observed off-the-job learning sessions in Croydon and at the main subcontracted provider of off-the-job training in engineering. All of the main training staff were observed training or making visits to employers. Eight employers were visited and, during these visits, five employers' staff were interviewed. Inspectors examined records of assessment, trainees' work, and 24 portfolios. They observed progress reviews, assessments and learning sessions, and interviewed 41 trainees. The following table shows the grades awarded to the on- and off-the-job learning activities observed by inspectors:

Grades awarded to learning activities

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering			2			2
Business administration	1	6				7
Total	1	6	2	0	0	9

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

6. Seleta offers a range of engineering NVQs at levels 2 and 3. The head office at Blackheath provides most of the support for engineering programmes. Trainees can specialise in electrical, machining, fitting, maintenance, technician and production occupations. Seleta also offers engineering foundation NVQs at level 2 and further vocational qualifications, which are provided by local subcontractors. Seleta promotes and arranges engineering training for both small and larger companies in the London area. Of the current trainees, on average half are unemployed when they are recruited. Unemployed trainees are trained to fill anticipated vacancies in the area. There are 29 advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3 NVQs, 14 foundation modern apprentices working towards level 2 NVQs, and 22 trainees on other work-based learning programmes working towards NVQs at level 2. The number of trainees on engineering programmes has decreased by 42 per cent in the past four years. All foundation and advanced modern apprentices in engineering are employed with local

companies. Most apprentices spend between 18 and 36 weeks at the main subcontractor to complete their initial off-the-job training. Foundation modern apprentices either work towards level 2 NVQs in engineering foundation or follow programmes such as electrical engineering, together with a suitable further-education programme and key skills. Most trainees who remain in training progress to become advanced modern apprentices. Employers' suitability is monitored to ensure that health and safety arrangements and training opportunities meet the programme's requirements. Off-the-job learning is tailored to suit trainees, following consultation with trainees, and employers. Some off-the-job and key skills training is provided at Seleta's head office.

7. Following engineering foundation training, the required theoretical knowledge is taught by subcontractors on a day-release basis. Subcontractors carry out assessments for level 2 NVQs in engineering foundation. Other assessments at levels 2 and 3 are carried out in the workplace by trainers. Each employer is responsible for nominating an experienced mentor to provide training and support for trainees. Training officers have relevant experience in engineering and hold appropriate occupational and assessors' qualifications. Additional units are identified for trainees, to complement the NVQ at levels 2 and 3. Trainees can also take higher national certificates. A small proportion of trainees employed by larger companies continue to degree level. Inspectors agreed with one of the four strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Others were considered to be no more than normal practice, for example health and safety and key skills training. Inspectors agreed with the weakness identified in the self-assessment report regarding employers' involvement in the NVQ work. Seleta is encouraging employers' staff to achieve assessors' qualifications but this has had a poor response from employers. The weakness regarding the production of portfolios has been addressed and trainees are now producing a good standard of evidence. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of portfolios
- ◆ wide range of additional qualifications achieved
- ◆ well-planned on-the-job training at level 3
- ◆ flexible on-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ poor understanding among some trainees and employers of the NVQ process
- ◆ low retention rates on modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ late introduction of key skills and NVQ assessment materials

8. Qualified assessors visit employers every six to eight weeks to review trainees' progress and assess them on completed tasks. Seleta's trainers visit the subcontractor weekly to monitor trainees' progress. In most cases, time is allocated on a weekly basis for trainees to work on their portfolios, which are of a good standard. Tasks are identified to meet the requirements of the training programme. Good use is made of digital photography and questioning to demonstrate trainees' competence, along with comprehensive logbook entries and statements endorsed by workplace mentors. The importance of health and safety is emphasised at all stages of training. Some trainees' portfolios include materials which show how basic health and safety requirements are met, including records of risk assessments and safety assignments carried out in the workplace. The progress-review process includes questioning on health and safety, with responses recorded as evidence of competence for units of the NVQ.

9. Seleta's links with employers and subcontractors are well established and resources at the training centre and colleges are good. Off-the-job training is good. Trainees working towards engineering foundation NVQs at level 2 complete various mandatory and optional practical activities. On completion of each task, they self-assess their work and give a grade. This is followed by a discussion and grading with the trainers, to evaluate the quality of their work. Most employers have modern, well-equipped workshops.

10. Opportunities are available for trainees to gain additional qualifications and experience. Seleta's staff give advice on the suitability of additional qualifications to meet individuals and employers' requirements. Many employers allow trainees to attend training events which are not identified in their individual learning plans. Many trainees are encouraged to take additional units in addition to their basic level 2 NVQ and others to take various occupational qualifications, which exceed the requirements of the framework. A large proportion of trainees are given additional training in health and safety and information technology and an introduction to programmable logic controllers and pneumatics.

11. Where evidence is difficult to identify in the workplace, training advisors arrange training in information technology at the training centre. Opportunities are available at Seleta's training centre for trainees to work on their own initiative, using modern computerised systems for training and self-assessment. On-the-job training towards NVQs at level 3 is well planned, and tailored to meet the requirements of the trainee and the employer. Employers offer a wide variety of engineering training for trainees and workplace mentors to help them to produce evidence. Trainees are encouraged to number tasks and cross-reference evidence to the NVQ units. One of Seleta's modern apprentices has been judged 'apprentice of the year' in a national competition. The award includes a cash prize and experience at one of the European branches of the company. The secondment will include mentoring by qualified engineers. Trainees are able to join modern apprenticeship programmes at any time of the year.

12. Some employers have few opportunities, due to production scheduling, for trainees to complete certain tasks. Communication with trainers has resulted in

training taking place at a time which suits both the company and the trainee. Many employers offer experience to trainees in all departments of the company. Trainees who have experienced difficulties with identifying training opportunities in the workplace have been temporarily transferred to other organisations to enable them to complete their training using the necessary equipment. Trainees in predominantly mechanical environments are given opportunities to experience electrical tasks under supervision.

13. There is an over-reliance on witness testimonies when assessing trainees on the level 3 NVQ programme. In the early stages of training, there is little direct observation of their performance in the workplace. In most cases, assessment in the workplace lacks rigour. Mentors and supervisors are not trained as assessors. There are several examples of workplace tasks entered into portfolios which have not been confirmed as authentic at the time of completion. Opportunities are missed during visits to continually assess trainees throughout their programmes. In most cases, assessments are not verified until the end of the programme. Some trainees have accumulated well-presented work-based evidence but have not organised it to meet the NVQ standards. Insufficient short-term targets are set for some trainees during assessment visits.

14. Assessment practices at the main subcontractor do not follow training and assessment guidelines. Check lists for observations are not always completed at the time of assessment. Feedback given to trainees on their performance is not always recorded. In the workplace, internal verification is completed at the end of the programme. Most trainees are unaware of the role of the internal verifier and do not know who their internal verifier is. There are no planned visits to explain the requirements to trainees or to complete any sampling of work midway through the programme. Some employers have a poor understanding of NVQs and key skills and are confused about the current engineering qualifications, which comprise a complex framework of units. Trainees demonstrate a good understanding of the tasks required in order to achieve the targets on their individual learning plans, but in many cases do not link the evidence collected to NVQ units. Key skills are not sufficiently integrated into the work-based training. Most workplace mentors and supervisors are well qualified in their respective trades, but are unable to link trainees' progress in the workplace to the achievement of NVQ units.

15. Retention rates on the modern apprenticeship programmes are low. Fifty per cent of advanced modern apprentices have left the programme early without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plans over the past three years. Some trainees complete their training at a later time with their employers. Over the past three years, approximately 30 per cent of foundation and advanced modern apprentices have left the programme without achieving any qualifications. Sixty-six per cent of trainees who have left programmes across all engineering disciplines have achieved NVQs. On programmes of other work-based learning, 70 per cent achieved all the targets on their individual learning plans. Most modern apprentices are still working towards their qualifications. More visits are being made to trainees, to encourage them to remain on their programmes, but there has been no significant improvement. Many trainees are not introduced to key skills or

NVQ assessment materials until late in their programmes. Some trainees see key skills as separate from the training, to be completed and assessed in isolation. In some cases, trainees who have completed the rest of their training programmes and are in the final year of their apprenticeship have not yet done the necessary work towards key skills. Trainees have difficulties in accumulating NVQ evidence and cross-referencing it to key skills at this late stage of the programme.

Business administration

Grade 3

16. Training in business administration and information technology is offered at the Croydon training centre. The centre was originally established for information-technology training, which was offered until 2000-01. Seleta has recently started to offer training leading to NVQs in administration. The new administration programme at level 2 includes optional units in information technology. There are 47 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 in administration. There are also four advanced modern apprentices, of whom one is undertaking an NVQ at level 3 in administration and the remainder are taking NVQs at level 3 in information technology. Seleta recruits trainees from schools and through the careers service. Following an induction and initial assessment, trainees attend the centre for training in computer software, computer hardware, key skills and administration. Training in information technology and key skills is given in a formal learning environment. Training in administration is provided at Seleta's premises, using assignments, projects and role-play. Some trainees are placed with employers. Trainees who are not placed with employers attend the training centre on a full-time basis. In its self-assessment report, Seleta accurately identified strengths in the training facilities and learning environment and in key skills training. The remaining two strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses identified by Seleta were more appropriate to trainee support. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given by Seleta.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training in information technology
- ◆ effective key skills training
- ◆ good achievement rates in information technology
- ◆ good learning facilities and resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor standard of portfolios in administration
- ◆ weak assessment practice
- ◆ shortage of good work placements

GOOD PRACTICE

Feedback is given constructively to trainees in their key skills work. The trainer encourages trainees to evaluate their reasoning when they give incorrect answers. This encourages trainees to try to form an answer and to seek clarification when they are unsure of something.

17. Learning sessions in key skills and computer software and hardware are well taught by a group of staff who work as a team. Trainees enjoy these three areas of their training. Staff constantly refer to what is covered in each other's sessions and the different subjects which are being learned. Trainees are able to give good presentations on a range of information-technology-related topics, and receive praise and constructive criticism from both their peers and their trainer. Good use is made of comparisons with earlier presentations and the improvements which have been made by all the trainees. Trainees demonstrate a good awareness of their own performance. Trainees perform well on key skills tests and constructive feedback is given when questions are answered wrongly. Trainees are made to feel sufficiently confident to ask for clarification of anything which they do not understand.

18. The handouts used in software training are of a good quality and are used effectively in learning sessions. Good use is made of the whiteboard by the trainer to reinforce key points and build up a set of concise notes for trainees. The trainer constantly checks trainees' understanding and there are chances for trainees to contribute their own experience of topics being covered when relevant. A commercial environment is simulated, with an emphasis on recording faults accurately, and keeping an accurate time log for each job undertaken. Progress reviews for the level 3 NVQ in information technology focus on trainees' satisfaction with off-the-job learning and collection of NVQ evidence in the workplace, as well as how trainees are treated at work. These trainees enjoy their off-the-job learning. In 1999-2000, 76 per cent of trainees achieved NVQs at level 2 in information technology.

19. The new business administration courses are provided on appropriate and well-resourced premises. The lecture room where most key skills learning takes place has a wide variety of visual aids which are used by trainees when making presentations, including computer projectors and whiteboards. The computer suite is well equipped with up-to-date hardware and software. The hardware workshops have a range of hardware which trainees can work with and use to solve a variety of installation and maintenance problems. There are plentiful supplies of motherboards, disk drives, hard drives and peripheral devices. The training centre is maintained to a high standard, and is even being cleaned at lunchtimes.

20. As the business administration programme has only been operating for four months, little progress has been made on trainees' portfolios. There is a lack of diversity of NVQ evidence in the portfolios. They do not demonstrate the level of trainees' competence or the range of training offered or work carried out at the work placement where applicable. None of the mandatory NVQ units have yet been adequately covered or assessed. Trainees take responsibility for their own portfolios but, with the exception of the information-technology elements, trainees are not shown how to use the portfolios as a point of reference for the future. Where trainees are in work placements, workplace supervisors endorse the work as authentic, but do not sign witness testimonies. Trainees have not cross-referenced any evidence to the NVQ standards.

21. Although the new business administration programme has been operational for four months, there are no assessment plans and trainees lack knowledge of their progress and completion dates. Seleta has no system for monitoring trainees' progress towards their NVQs and no established system for recording assessments on an ongoing basis. Most assessments are planned for the end of the programme or when trainees have made significant progress. As most of the trainees are currently based in house, simulated evidence, including assignments, is given a high priority. Seleta has recognised the need to review its arrangements for assessment and plans to do this in the coming months. There is a shortage of good work placements. Of the 51 business administration trainees, most of whom are working towards NVQs at level 2, seven are on work placements and the remaining 44 are being trained full time in the training centre. Seleta has recognised the need for effective work-based training and has been undertaking a marketing campaign to secure additional good-quality work placements. A large national organisation has offered a number of good work placements leading to jobs. Work placements have been organised for the start of 2001.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

22. Seleta has an equal opportunities policy for employees and all areas of business activity. The policy is signed by the chief executive and is revised and reviewed at least every 12 months. All staff are issued with a copy of the policy. Staff sign their copy. The policy is prominently displayed on the notice board in the entrances to the two training centres. The policy includes statements on diversity to encourage employees to respond positively to individuals during selection and training. Directors and senior management are responsible for monitoring the procedures set out in the policy. The company's policy for staff selection includes promoting equal opportunities and using positive images. Staff appraisals are used to assess their understanding of equal opportunities. Advertisements and other literature include equal opportunities statements. Local economic and labour-market statistics are used to monitor the diversity of applicants, trainees and leavers. Equal opportunities action plans are used and targets set. Seleta's policies for recruitment, selection and induction of staff refer to equal opportunities. There is access to training premises for those with disabilities.

23. The self-assessment report included some helpful information about Seleta's equal opportunities policies and practices. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths. A weakness identified in the self-assessment report, relating to the effectiveness of action-planning, was not considered to be a weakness. Two further weaknesses were identified by inspectors. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of positive role models
- ◆ effective promotion of learning opportunities to minority ethnic groups
- ◆ good equal opportunities practices

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no recording of trainees' understanding of equal opportunities at induction and progress reviews
- ◆ poor awareness of equal opportunities among some employers and trainees

24. Staff are well informed on equal opportunities and are able to use their own experience to help trainees. Of the 12 staff, three are from minority ethnic groups and five are women. Staff promote equal opportunities by visiting schools and encouraging participation by women and trainees from minority ethnic groups. For example, girls' schools are targeted for the recruitment of engineering trainees. Trainees accompany staff on such visits and attend careers conventions. Where appropriate, trainees for whom English is not their first language are encouraged to attend careers conventions and other promotional events to communicate with school leavers and parents in their first language.

25. Seleta collects and analyses statistics relating to the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups participating in the local employment market in relevant boroughs. This is compared with the proportion of trainees from these groups. Managers analyse these data on a regular basis for both of the main training centres. Action plans are produced and reviewed to rectify any shortfalls in participation by minority ethnic groups and any gender imbalances. Seleta also provides learning opportunities to other under-represented groups, mainly through its literature. This is complemented by regular staff reviews and discussions to raise awareness of equal opportunities. Staff receive training in equal opportunities and have been on external courses. The information they learn is systematically shared with the rest of the staff.

26. Trainees from minority ethnic groups are well represented. Of the current trainees at both centres, over 25 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. This proportion is higher than the proportion of minority ethnic participants of a similar age in the labour markets for the areas from which Seleta recruits. In business administration, 40 per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups and in engineering the proportion is over 10 per cent.

27. Seleta's equal opportunities policy is aimed mainly at employees of the company. It does not specifically address the needs of trainees or the responsibilities of employers and subcontractors. Trainees are provided with a copy of the policy as an attachment to the trainees' handbook. However, equal opportunities is covered in depth at induction, when staff explain and discuss relevant issues with trainees. There is no recording of discussions of equal

opportunities during trainees' regular progress reviews off the job or when they are placed with employers or at college.

28. Some employers have a poor awareness of issues relating to equality of opportunity. Staff check work placements before trainees join them. Work placements are also monitored, as part of the routine visits to employers and during the regular reviews of trainees' progress in the workplace. Equal opportunities is mentioned in general terms in the agreement which Seleta draws up with employers. However, Seleta does little to reinforce the policy or to explain to employers in detail its expectations of them with regard to providing equality of opportunity. With a few exceptions, employers' understanding of the issues is basic and they have little awareness of their responsibilities in this area.

Trainee support

Grade 2

29. Trainees are referred to Seleta from local careers services and also respond directly to press advertising. The recruitment and selection process involves individual and group interviews and tests. Induction covers the rights and responsibilities of trainees, the structure and content of the learning programme, an introduction to the centre or employers' rules and regulations, and a general introduction to Seleta's staff. A review of the induction takes place and a record is placed in trainees' files. Induction takes place on trainees' first day at Seleta and at the subcontracted college. There is also an induction for trainees when they move to a work placement. Initial assessment is carried out on entry to training and this includes screening tests and an interview. Trainees' prior achievements and key skills are assessed. Staff identify trainees with learning difficulties or personal problems during the initial assessment and subsequent progress reviews and arrange appropriate support. Support for trainees is co-ordinated by senior staff. Arrangements for supporting trainees are covered in a handbook and form part of the company's quality assurance arrangements. Trainees receive pastoral, learning and technical support from qualified employees at the training centres in Croydon and Blackheath. Trainees on work placements or with employers are visited monthly for progress reviews. There is a trainee-of-the-month award for trainees attending full-time courses at the training centre.

30. Seleta's self-assessment report provided helpful details about induction and initial assessment. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report, which related to the celebration of trainees' successes and trainee awards gained by trainees. A further strength, relating to additional learning, was identified by inspectors. The self-assessment report included a weakness, relating to initial assessment and the increasing need to identify trainees' social, emotional, and personal problems. The inspectors agreed with these points and related them to individualised planning of training. Inspectors identified a further weakness, concerning weak target-setting. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ regular celebration of trainees' achievements
- ◆ good individual support
- ◆ personal development opportunities for trainees
- ◆ good access to additional learning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak target-setting
- ◆ no use of individual learning plans as working documents

31. Trainees on all programmes are encouraged to progress. In the off-the-job training in business administration, staff reinforce the need to progress by setting personal goals for trainees to achieve. Trainees are encouraged to compare their achievements with those of other trainees. They measure, with staff's assistance, their progress in relation to the group's performance. Trainees' punctuality attendance and attitude are also compared in this way. Staff organise a trainee-of-the-month award, which trainees can gain for their overall efforts and behaviour, not just for being the highest achiever. A similar approach is taken on the engineering programme over a longer period of time and with involvement from employers. Apprenticeship-of-the-year competitions are organised and awards given. In some cases, trainees are encouraged to compete in external competitions. In all cases, the achievement of awards is publicly celebrated and publicised internally on notice boards. There are also examples of trainees' achievements being celebrated with external publicity. Some trainees have attended awards ceremonies and have been presented with plaques and other rewards by prominent local people. Photographs of the presentations have appeared in the local press. Notice boards give details of trainees who go on to obtain good jobs.

32. Staff work effectively with individual trainees and get to know them very well. In the off-the-job programme for business administration, trainers work closely and effectively with trainees. Staff accurately identify learning support needs and give personal support by contacting trainees on a daily basis. On the engineering programme, trainees are visited weekly at college and regularly in their work placements. On-the-job support for trainees is effective and frequent. Trainees' individual needs are identified and, when necessary, appropriate staff arrange additional training or provide personal support. For example, trainees may be given advice on finances and budgeting, and housing difficulties are discussed. In some cases, trainees are referred to appropriate agencies. Childcare advice and support are provided by a trained member of staff. In other cases, trainees may require additional help with numeracy and this is provided by staff. In most cases, details of additional support are recorded and outcomes noted.

33. Trainees are encouraged to take advantage of extra courses and learning opportunities. For example, trainees have developed computer-networking skills through additional training from off-the-job staff. In other cases, trainees develop

interpersonal skills. One group of trainees was encouraged to work with a local school. The school provided educational opportunities for children with additional learning needs. Trainees and staff reviewed the facilities and equipment at the school and drew up plans for refurbishment and repairs. These were agreed and the work carried out. The trainees worked as a project team. This involved taking responsibility for all aspects of the work, including planning, agreeing specifications and negotiating schedules. Trainees carried out the work and the project was reviewed. The skills which had been gained were identified and included teamwork, leadership and taking responsibility. The project was the subject of a group presentation, which further developed trainees' communication skills.

34. Trainees' progress is reviewed on a regular basis and records are kept. In business administration, the review is based on progress made with the off-the-job programme and covers attitude, attendance, punctuality and general behaviour. Separate progress reviews are carried out by the senior training officer twice during the six months of off-the-job learning. Records of progress reviews are kept but entries lack detail. The small number of trainees on work placements also have progress reviews of this type. The progress-review records refer to whether trainees are 'on target', but there is no explanation of what that means. The NVQ programme is not referred to, nor are specific units or elements mentioned. Reviews of engineering trainees' progress are also related to the learning programme in the work placement but not to NVQ progress and achievement. On both programmes, target-setting and planning in relation to the work trainees need to do to achieve their NVQ are poor. Trainees and employers are generally unaware of progress in relation to the NVQ programme.

35. Trainees' individual learning plans are drawn up on entry to training. These are all of a similar type and contain standard information. There are no records of the results of initial assessment or information gained during the selection and entry process which could be used to set targets. Target dates set for trainees to complete programmes are uniform and are not realistic in business administration. Targets for achievements are not broken down into milestones, nor are targets set in relation to NVQ units. Work-placement opportunities are not recorded, and records are not amended when trainees change programmes. When trainees have achieved qualifications or undergone additional training, this is not recorded. Training plans are not used as working documents. Various other documents are used but these do not provide a comprehensive reference for identifying an individual's training plan, progress and achievements.

Management of training

Grade 3

36. Seleta was founded in 1968 and operates from two sites. The Blackheath training centre provides training in engineering, and the Croydon training centre, which was opened in July 1999, provides training in business administration and information technology. There are two directors, who take responsibility for the strategic planning and development of Seleta. The directors have substantial

experience in the management of training and are directly involved in day-to-day learning activities. One of the directors is the managing director, with responsibility for the operational aspects of Seleta, while the other director is principally responsible for its financial management, in addition to having operational responsibilities. In addition to the directors, there are four trainers and a contract manager located in the Croydon training centre. At the Blackheath training centre, Seleta employs two trainers, two administrative staff, two sales staff and two fork-lift truck instructors. In addition, there are five associate training staff who provide training at the Blackheath training centre. The directors and staff providing training are all occupationally experienced and hold or are working towards assessors' qualifications. Seleta was accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1995. The self-assessment report included four strengths and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with the strengths relating to staff development and business planning but considered the remaining strengths and the weakness to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of business-planning to set targets
- ◆ well-planned staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor management of some NVQ programmes

37. Seleta has a business plan which covers all the main areas of its work and takes account of changes in the external environment which may have an impact on its overall performance. The business plan is used effectively to guide its strategic direction and planning. The business plan identifies a range of strategic objectives for the company. These objectives are used to set targets for learning programmes and individual members of staff. Progress towards strategic objectives and individual targets is regularly monitored by the managing director.

38. Seleta uses its business plan in an effective staff-appraisal system to identify the most important areas of performance for each member of staff. Staff appraisals are carried out quarterly and performance indicators and developmental needs are reviewed at each appraisal. Staff are encouraged to identify developmental needs linked to the business plan and are provided with opportunities both to attend external training courses and to develop contacts with external agencies. The staff-development process has been used effectively by Seleta to develop the skills and knowledge of staff recruited to the organisation over the past 18 months.

39. Many of Seleta's management practices are no more than normal practice. There is a high level of communication within Seleta, with important issues being communicated through written memoranda and reports. Regular team meetings are

held, and the minutes are distributed to relevant staff. Seleta has a fair, open and competitive recruitment process, with job vacancies being advertised to all sections of the local community.

40. Seleta identified that it would be unable to meet the new assessment requirements for information technology NVQ programmes within its training centre for new trainees registered with the awarding body from April 2000. It was unsuccessful in securing funding for other qualifications in information technology, and so it developed a programme in business administration which provides the opportunity for trainees to develop information-technology skills alongside other administrative skills. This programme is less well structured than Seleta's other training programmes and does not provide trainees with the opportunity to gain experience of working in a realistic office environment. The programme is taught by staff who are inexperienced in providing training towards NVQs in administration. This new programme is only now being improved through staff development and support from the managing director.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

41. Seleta has procedures for assuring the quality of all its operations and works to the ISO 9001 quality standards. Overall responsibility for quality assurance rests with the managing director. The directors carry out internal verification and two additional members of staff are working towards internal verifiers' qualifications. Seleta's arrangements for internal verification meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. The reports of external verifiers' visits are considered at team meetings. Seleta has one subcontractor but has arrangements for internal verification to be conducted by its own staff rather than the subcontractor. Questionnaires are used to seek the views of trainees on the quality of their training. Feedback from staff and employers is also obtained. The self-assessment report included three strengths and one weakness. Inspectors considered the identified strengths and the weakness to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified two strengths and two weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given by Seleta in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective monitoring of in-house training
- ◆ thorough analysis of trainees' feedback

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient recording and updating of quality assurance procedures
- ◆ ineffective sharing of good practice

42. The managing director monitors the quality of Seleta's training through frequent direct observation of learning sessions. As a result, trainers are given advice on the design and structure of learning sessions and training methods. Trainers are also provided with both verbal and written feedback on their performance. The monitoring of training is also used to identify any needs for staff development. Feedback from trainees on in-house learning programmes on the quality of their training is collected on a systematic basis and is then effectively analysed. Seleta analyses the views of trainees who have recently joined the programme and those who have more experience of its services. The results of feedback from trainees are used to identify how training can be improved. The feedback obtained in relation to individual trainers is used within the staff-appraisal process to identify training requirements.

43. Seleta's written quality assurance procedures are not always implemented effectively. Many staff have little understanding of the systems used. Managers and staff have developed their own systems for quality assurance, which they use frequently, in preference to the written quality assurance procedures. This results in variations in the quality of induction and progress reviews in engineering and business administration. The contractual arrangements with the subcontractor do not specify a systematic approach to the monitoring of quality or identify how subcontractors' arrangements for quality assurance will be used continuously to improve training.

44. The training sites at Blackheath and Croydon operate largely independently with few opportunities for staff from each of the training centres to share their knowledge and expertise. For example, the good use which is made of the collection and analysis of the views of trainees at the Croydon centre has not been adopted systematically for employed trainees at the Blackheath training centre. Seleta has no system for collecting and analysing the views of employers, although the views of many are sought in practice. The effective monitoring of the quality of training provided at the Croydon training centre has not been adopted and adapted for training provided by the subcontractor. The arrangements for training in key skills for information technology and business administration trainees are effective, but for engineering trainees the arrangements are not of the same high standard. Some other good practices are not shared between the two occupational areas.

45. The managing director wrote Seleta's self-assessment report. While other staff contributed to the business plan, they had little involvement in the production of the self-assessment report. The report itself was satisfactory, but did not provide sufficient references to sources of evidence to support the judgements made. Inspectors agreed with one of the six grades given in the report, for trainee support. They awarded a higher grade for equal opportunities and lower grades than Seleta for the two occupational areas, management of training and quality assurance.