



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

Chelmsford College

SUMMARY

Chelmsford College provides effective training in foundation for work which leads to good progression into employment. Training in construction, engineering and care is satisfactory. There is a wide range of supportive employers who provide good off-the-job training. However, there is insufficient assessment of trainees' competence in the workplace. Quality assurance is satisfactory. There is good use of action-planning linked to a self-critical self-assessment process. Some aspects of work-based training are not covered by the college's quality assurance procedures. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities. Initial assessment lacks rigour and does not contribute to trainees' individual training plans. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is inadequate.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ experienced and well-qualified staff
- ◆ wide range of good employers and work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ effective analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ good support services in the college
- ◆ effective management of change
- ◆ good action-planning in most areas

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ late introduction of key skills for most trainees
- ◆ slow progress for many trainees
- ◆ inadequate progress reviews
- ◆ insufficient promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ weak initial assessment
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient health and safety monitoring in the workplace
- ◆ quality assurance procedures inappropriate for some work-based training
- ◆ insufficient feedback from trainees and employers

INTRODUCTION

1. Chelmsford College is a medium-sized, further education college with approximately 1,500 full-time and 3,500 part-time students. It operates from two sites, about one mile apart. The college first contracted with Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in 1990, to provide work-based training in engineering and a preparation for work programme for trainees with additional learning needs. The college currently has a contract with Essex TEC to provide advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in construction, engineering, management and professional, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, and care. It also has a contract to provide a training programme leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in care and a foundation for work programme leading to prevocational qualifications and NVQs at level 1. In total there are 168 trainees, of whom 133 are advanced modern apprentices, 14 are foundation modern apprentices and 21 are on other training and foundation for work programmes. Four occupational areas, with 154 trainees, were inspected: construction; engineering; health, care and public services; and foundation for work. The other occupational areas were not inspected as there were only 14 trainees in total in these areas.

2. Work-based training is the responsibility of a training unit within the college. The head of the unit reports directly to the college principal. The contract manager in the training unit is responsible for the overall administration of the contract with the TEC. The unit employs 28 full-time and three part-time staff. There are two managers and four administrative staff. The others are lecturers, trainers, instructors and technicians. Fifteen staff are qualified assessors and six are qualified internal verifiers. Staff from the training unit provide the training programmes in construction, engineering and foundation for work. The college's staff are responsible for the training in the other occupational areas. Trainees are based on both of the college's sites and have access to all the facilities and resources available to other students at the college.

3. Chelmsford has been a centre for high-technology manufacturing for many years although the number of people employed in this sector has been declining steadily over the past 20 years. Now, the proportion of the local working population employed in manufacturing is just over half the average for England as a whole. The reduction in the number of manufacturing jobs has been more than compensated for by an increase in service sector employment, particularly in the public sector. The unemployment rate in Chelmsford is low, at 1.6 per cent, compared with the averages for Essex and England of 2.3 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively. In Chelmsford, 21 per cent of those unemployed are aged between 18 and 24. This compares with 23 per cent in Essex and 29 per cent in England. The proportion of young people participating in full-time education in Essex is similar to that in England as a whole. However, a smaller proportion of young people in Essex are on government-funded training programmes or in part-time education than is the case nationally. Chelmsford has high educational achievement rates, with 63 per cent of 16 year olds gaining five or more general certificates of

secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above compared with the average for Essex of 50.8 per cent and for England of 49.2 per cent. At the 1991 census, the proportion of the population of Chelmsford from minority ethnic groups was 2 per cent. This is slightly higher than the average for Essex but much lower than the average of 6.2 per cent for England.

4. For convenience, throughout this report reference will be made to advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships irrespective of when a trainee was first registered. These terms should be taken to include trainees originally registered for modern apprenticeships and national traineeships respectively.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. All staff from the training unit were involved in the self-assessment process. The head of the unit wrote the report. Staff were asked to comment on the report before it was submitted to the college for approval and added to the college's overall self-assessment report prepared for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). A college review group, comprising staff from academic and business support areas, considered the full report, which was then scrutinised by the college's corporation quality committee, who recommended its endorsement by the full college corporation. A grading committee made the final grading decisions. The self-assessment report provides an accurate description of the work-based training programmes. It is self-critical and identifies many of the weaknesses subsequently found by the inspectors. Some additional weaknesses were found by inspectors, particularly in the generic aspects of the provision. In one of the four occupational areas inspected and three of the four generic aspects of the provision, the inspectors awarded lower grades than those in the self-assessment report. One occupational area was awarded a grade higher than the self-assessment grade.

6. The inspection was conducted jointly by a team of inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) and the FEFC. Where appropriate, evidence obtained by the FEFC's inspectors was used by the TSC's inspectors. A team of five inspectors from the TSC spent a total of 20 days at Chelmsford College. The inspectors visited both of the college's sites and 23 work placements. They interviewed 47 trainees, 17 employers and workplace supervisors, and 19 of the college's staff. Inspectors examined a range of documents including trainees' files and portfolios, records of assessments and internal and external verification, minutes of meetings, contracts, management files and quality assurance procedures. They observed six progress reviews and 14 training sessions. The grades awarded by inspectors for the training sessions they observed are given in the table below:

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	1		2			3
Engineering		3	2			5
Health, care & public services			2			2
Foundation for work	1	2	1			4
Total	2	5	7	0	0	14

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

7. Chelmsford College provides advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in a variety of construction trades. There are 32 trainees funded by the TEC. The numbers of trainees on each of the programmes are given in the table below. Most of the trainees are employed. The college is a subcontractor to two other training providers. There are 66 modern apprentices in electrical installation funded by a subcontract with one training provider and 52 trainees working towards NVQs in various construction trades funded by a subcontract with the other training provider. All funded by the TEC attend the college for an initial two-week block of off-the-job training at the start of their programmes and subsequently attend off-the-job training for one day each week. Half of the training day is spent in a workshop doing practical training and half in a classroom doing theoretical work. Some trainees attend college for three further blocks of two weeks. The college has separate workshops for each trade. There are 12 full-time and one part-time staff. Five are qualified as assessors and three have internal verifiers' qualifications. All training staff have training qualifications. Trainees are employed by, or on work placements with, appropriate construction companies, including furniture manufacturers, large and small construction firms, specialist door and window makers, fitted kitchen installers and large electrical contractors. The overall retention rate is 64 per cent. No trainee has yet completed the whole of their training plan. The inspectors did not agree with all the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

Number of trainees on each programme

	Advanced modern apprenticeship	Foundation modern apprenticeship	Total
Electrical installation	12	-	12
Carpentry and joinery	5	4	9
Brickwork	5	2	7
Painting and decorating	3	1	4
Total	25	7	32

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of supportive employers
- ◆ experienced and well-qualified staff
- ◆ good monitoring of trainees' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no work-based assessment in most trades
- ◆ poor training resources in some areas
- ◆ late introduction of key skills for most trainees
- ◆ slow achievement

8. Off-the-job training is good. Thorough instruction is provided and clear practical demonstrations are given in appropriate techniques. Training programmes are organised to allow trainees to progress at their own rate. The college maintains clear records of attendance and progress. Feedback to trainees is prompt and comprehensive. On-the-job training is provided by supportive employers who provide the breadth and depth of experience trainees need to complete their training programmes. Trainees are given a wide variety of tasks to complete at work. Employers understand the NVQ system and know what their trainees are doing during their off-the-job training. Communications and liaison between employers and college staff are good. College-based trainers are all occupationally qualified and have appropriate work experience. They also hold training qualifications. Off-the-job training is matched to trainees' workplace experiences. There is good monitoring of trainees' progress. Records are clear, easily accessible and up to date. Trainees know how they are progressing.

9. There is no on-the-job assessment in carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, or bricklaying. In these crafts, all assessments are carried out at the college despite frequent opportunities for workplace assessment. All trainees are issued with logbooks in which to record evidence of their job skills but little reference is made to these records in the planning of training. Trainees are not encouraged to gather evidence from the workplace. There are some poor training resources. Some training areas are cramped. The temporary building for carpentry and joinery is poorly maintained. Some tools used by trainees are in a poor condition and lead to inaccurate work. Key skills are not introduced until late in the programme for many trainees. Trainees are aware that they need to acquire key skills but do not know exactly what is required. They are missing many opportunities to gather evidence of key skills in the early part of their training programmes. No trainee has achieved all the key skills required by their programme.

Engineering

Grade 3

10. Chelmsford College offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in a variety of engineering disciplines. There are 74 trainees. The numbers of trainees on each programme are given in the table below. All trainees are employed. Most work for precision engineering companies in the Chelmsford area. Trainees initially work towards an engineering foundation NVQ at level 2, attending the college on one day each week. Evidence for their level 3 NVQ comes entirely from the workplace, but advanced modern apprentices continue to attend

the college for one day each week to complete the examination-based qualifications which are part of their individual training plans. The college has several mechanical, electrical and electronics workshops. There are seven staff. Five are qualified as assessors and three as internal verifiers. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices is 75 per cent. College-based staff undertake all the assessments and internal verification. The self-assessment report identified some strengths and weaknesses and included an appropriate action plan. The inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses but awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

Number of trainees on each programme

	Advanced modern apprenticeship	Foundation modern apprenticeship	Total
Engineering production	23	1	24
Electronic engineering	2	-	2
Instrumentation engineering	13	-	13
Electrical/electronics technician	9	-	9
Engineering technician	12	-	12
Engineering maintenance	14	-	14
Total	73	1	74

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of good work placements
- ◆ good retention rate

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ ineffective progress monitoring
- ◆ late introduction of key skills for many trainees

11. Off-the-job training takes place in a series of work areas in the college. These are well equipped with basic mechanical engineering equipment. The equipment is not modern but is well maintained and provides good facilities for the engineering foundation NVQ. The training unit has designed a training system which covers all aspects of off-the-job training including skills development, portfolio-building, assessment, and introduction to key skills. The package is simple to use and generates sufficient information to allow staff to make accurate judgements on the performance of individual trainees.

12. Advanced modern apprentices are employed in a wide range of companies in the Chelmsford area. The companies vary from high-technology companies in aerospace design and development to small jobbing engineers who provide services to the local community. They include precision engineers who supply parts for airlines, yachts and racing cars, and companies specialising in toolmaking, moulding and the manufacture of high precision surface plates. This range of employers allows the trainees to experience a range of appropriate jobs.

13. The retention rate is good. The rate for advanced modern apprentices is 75 per cent, as is the overall rate for all trainees over the past four years. This good retention rate has been achieved by providing the trainees with effective training, appropriate jobs and active support from the training unit.

14. Opportunities for trainees to gather evidence of competence in the workplace are missed. Trainees record the jobs they have done in their logbooks. This forms part of their portfolio of evidence. There are long time intervals between consecutive entries in these logbooks. There is little assessment in the workplace when trainees are visited by college staff. Many trainees are not able to identify suitable opportunities for recording evidence towards their qualifications. The system for monitoring trainees' progress is ineffective. The college does not know what each trainee has achieved in the workplace and how far they have progressed towards their qualifications. Action-planning is ineffective and trainees are making slow progress towards their qualifications. Employers and workplace supervisors are not aware of their trainees' progress. Some advanced modern apprentices who have been on training programme for some time have not started collecting evidence relating to key skills. They are unaware of the key skills requirements and have missed opportunities to gather appropriate evidence.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

15. Chelmsford College provides training in care and in early-years care and education. There are 28 trainees, of whom 25 are advanced modern apprentices, two are foundation modern apprentices and one is on another youth training programme working towards an NVQ at level 2. Trainees work towards either the care or the early-years care and education NVQ at levels 2 and 3. A college department known as health and care manages recruitment, induction, training, assessment and verification of these awards. There are four visiting assessors for the care NVQs, and six visiting and five work-based assessors for the early-years care and education NVQs. Seven of these staff hold the internal verifiers' award. All staff are occupationally qualified and experienced. An NVQ consortium manager has been appointed to be responsible for the promotion and management of NVQs in care. This person is also the programme manager for the early-years care and education awards. Training in moving and handling is subcontracted to an outside organisation. All trainees are employed. They work in a variety of workplaces, including day nurseries, residential homes and nursing homes. All trainees are issued with a course handbook. It contains information about the NVQ

they are working towards, off-the-job training, work-based assessment and the appeals procedure, and an outline of the roles of those who will support them during their training. Trainees attend off-the-job training at the college one day each week. Of the 47 trainees who started training since 1997, 13 have left early and six have transferred to other programmes. To date, three modern apprenticeships, five NVQs at level 2 and four NVQs at level 3 have been achieved. The self-assessment report identified as strengths several aspects of the training which were no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade which was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ flexible arrangements for off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ over-reliance on written evidence
- ◆ inadequate action-planning

16. Trainees have access to a variety of learning resources in the health and social care base room. This room is equipped mainly for those working towards early-years, care and social care qualifications. The resources include a wide range of relevant, up-to-date journals, videos and textbooks. The college has a variety of teaching aids, including a hospital bed for demonstrating bed making, a skeleton for anatomy lessons, an adult resuscitation manikin and a range of feeding utensils and incontinence aids. Early-years resources include a variety of art and craft materials. The work placements are good. Trainees have many opportunities to gain valuable and varied experiences by working with a range of clients of various ages who have a variety of needs.

17. Trainees attend off-the-job training one day each week. Timetables for the weekly training sessions are issued at the beginning of each term. This enables trainees to undertake any necessary preparatory work and to choose the sessions which they feel are most appropriate. Tutors are available between 9 am and 8 pm. Trainees can attend at any time during this period and stay for as long as they feel necessary. Many trainees attend to take advantage of the textbooks and journals which are available and to share ideas with other trainees. There is a rolling programme of three one-hour training sessions; one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The evening sessions are mainly related to the early-years awards. Tutors are available to provide individual or group support sessions. The open-door approach and rolling programme of training allow trainees to attend at times which suit their work commitments.

18. Trainees are required to produce large amounts of written evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Most trainees are required to produce this work in their own time and some find the amount burdensome. Insufficient use is made of oral questioning, witness testimony and presentation of work products. Many workplace supervisors recognise these inadequacies and are willing to become more involved in the assessment process but have little knowledge of the NVQ requirements.

19. Most trainees do not undertake any formal action-planning with their assessor for the units they are working towards. Most are confused by the language in the NVQ documents. Trainees are expected to work through the NVQ units and decide what evidence they should produce. As a result of their confusion, trainees produce an unnecessarily large amount of written evidence. This delays their progress. The college has identified this weakness and, at the time of the inspection, all new trainees working towards the early-years care and education awards were receiving guidance on action-planning. However, a requirement to complete an action plan will further increase the amount of written work trainees are required to do.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

20. Chelmsford College provides prevocational training for young people on youth training programmes. Some school leavers are referred to the college by the careers service; other trainees start as a result of having been on other college courses. Trainees are assessed by the careers service before being referred to the programme. All applicants are interviewed by one of the trainers to assess their suitability. Most trainees begin their training in September. Work placements are organised for trainees as soon as they have a clear idea of the occupational area in which they wish to work. Trainees normally spend two days each week in a work placement and three days at college increasing their confidence and independence and developing other employment skills such as teamworking, communication, using computers, project work and improving literacy and numeracy skills if appropriate. Trainees who are undecided about which occupational area they are interested in have the opportunity to spend up to 10 weeks on other college courses to help them decide. These include catering, electronics, construction, painting and decorating and engineering. Training normally lasts for one year, with trainees attending college for at least 16 hours each week. Over the past four years, 67 per cent of trainees have either gained employment or gone on to undertake further training. Fifty per cent have completed their training programme. The retention rate averages 69 per cent over the past four years. Currently, there are 20 trainees on the programme. Some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been addressed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors identified additional strengths and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good progression rate into employment and further training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate progress reviews
- ◆ reduced programme during summer period

21. The off-the-job training includes classroom sessions on life skills, information technology, literacy and numeracy. Computer training takes place in an information technology suite equipped with 20 computers. Other teaching sessions take place in a classroom specifically assigned to this group of trainees. The room is well decorated and furnished, and has wall displays which are of interest to the trainees as well as being informative. The room is equipped with a range of good resources produced by trainers. Short course options are available for trainees in a number of occupational areas including engineering, painting and decorating, catering and brickwork. As well as providing some basic occupational skills, these short courses help trainees make informed career choices.

22. Out of the 20 trainees on the programme, nine have a work placement. The appropriate company interviews the trainee before a placement is finally agreed. The placement officer always accompanies the trainee to the interview. Most placements occupy two days each week, but the number of days can be increased or reduced with the agreement of the trainee, the placement supervisor from the college and the workplace supervisor. Relations between the work-placement providers and the college are good and any concerns on either side are dealt with promptly. A wide range of training is available, in supermarkets, day nurseries, public sector offices, car dealerships, garages and care homes. Trainees undertake work tasks which are suited to their capabilities, as well as meeting the needs of the employer. The proportion of trainees gaining employment or moving on to further training has been consistently high over the past four years, averaging 67 per cent. The proportion of trainees achieving all the targets in their individual training plans over the same period is 50 per cent.

23. Reviews of trainees' progress take place monthly. The action points identified as a result of the progress review are recorded on the trainees' progress-review sheet but do not always specify any learning or training targets, and are not followed up at the next progress review. The written comments recorded are often too vague to be useful. Progress reviews undertaken recently show some improvements. All progress reviews relate to part of the training only. For example, when progress reviews take place in the workplace, no reference is made to the training being done in college. There is a reduced programme of off-the-job training over the summer period. Trainees are offered the option of attending college for one day a week and receive written assignment work. Four of the six trainees on the programme over the previous summer were under the impression

that training had stopped. The training unit has recognised the need to improve this aspect of the training.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

24. Chelmsford College has an equal opportunities policy. There are complaints and grievances procedures and a disability statement. At induction, all trainees are given a handbook which contains copies of the equal opportunities policy and the complaints procedure. Overall responsibility for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy lies with the college's director of client services. Trainees' gender, ethnicity and any disabilities are noted at recruitment. Half of 1 per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups, and 71 per cent of trainees are men. All trainees on care programmes are women. All trainees in construction and 96 per cent of trainees in engineering are men. Eight per cent of trainees have a disability. There is access to all areas of the college for people with a physical disability. Inspectors did not agree with all the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive complaints and grievance procedures
- ◆ effective analysis of equal opportunities data

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ poor monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practices
- ◆ low awareness of equal opportunities issues among trainees

25. The complaints procedure for trainees is included in the students' handbook. It states how a trainee should make a complaint and who should be contacted at each stage of the process. It also explains how the college will respond and when the trainee can expect to receive a reply. There is a separate grievance procedure for staff which is contained in the staff handbook. This is clearly laid out and specifies the processes by which a complaint should be made and how it will be addressed. Data on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disability are collected and analysed. The results are compared with local data to identify trends in recruitment.

26. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities. There are no structured plans to work with external organisations or communities to encourage individuals

from under-represented groups to become involved in training. Less than half a per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups compared with 2 per cent of the local population. The proportion is also low when compared with the rest of the college, where 9 per cent of students are from minority ethnic groups. All trainees in care are women and all trainees in construction are men. There is very little promotional material aimed at breaking down gender stereotyping.

27. There is insufficient monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practices. Until very recently, employers were not checked to see whether they had an equal opportunities policy of their own. Equal opportunities issues are not discussed with employers. Once trainees are placed with an employer, there is no further monitoring of the employer's equal opportunities policy, its revision to take account of changes in legislation or its implementation. Many trainees have a poor understanding of equal opportunities issues. They do not remember discussing equal opportunities as part of their induction; are not able to provide any examples of how equality of opportunity might affect them; and do not understand how the college policy protects them from unfair treatment in college and at work.

Grade 4

Trainee support

28. Trainees are recruited mainly through employers and also through the careers service, other training providers, and by word of mouth. In addition, staff visit schools to tell them about the training opportunities available at the college. The contracts manager attends careers events and special careers evenings in local schools. Through liaison with the careers service, the college writes to all parents of school leavers, inviting them to visit the college to see the facilities and discuss the training on offer. Trainees who are accepted by the college are matched to suitable employers. Trainees are registered onto programmes throughout the year but off-the-job training takes place on an annual cycle. All trainees undergo an initial interview. In some instances, a staff member visits the employer, or the parents, to explain the content of the college course in which the applicant has expressed an interest and to set out the alternatives. A half-day induction programme, mainly formulated around health and safety issues, takes place on the trainees' first day at college. Trainees receive an initial assessment. No member of staff is qualified to accredit trainees' prior achievements. Trainees have regular progress reviews. The inspectors did not agree with all the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support services
- ◆ good impartial advice to prospective trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate individual training plans
- ◆ weak initial assessment
- ◆ ineffective induction

29. There is a wide range of good support services available to trainees at the college. These include specialist advisory services, counselling and study skills workshops. Trainees are aware of, and make use of, these facilities and resources. During the six-week summer break, when little off-the-job training takes place, the college arranges for key skills training sessions to be held for some trainees. The relationship between instructors and trainees is good. Occupationally specific health and safety training is conducted in the college workshops. Trainees who apply to the college receive individual, impartial interviews with the contracts manager when the various alternatives available to them from other colleges and providers are explained. All trainees receive good support from tutors throughout their training and there is good communication between the college and employers.

30. Individual training plans are inadequate. They show only a requirement to achieve an NVQ by a certain date and do not indicate how trainees will develop the required key skills. The expected completion dates are the same for all trainees starting at the same time. Trainees' prior achievements are not always recorded. When they are, they have little influence on the trainees' individual training plan. Opportunities for employers to contribute to individual training plans are missed. Additional learning support is provided but is not recorded on trainees' individual training plans. Trainees make little input to their own training programmes. Some trainees' abilities in basic and key skills are not tested and some trainees' additional support needs go unrecognised. The initial induction at the college concentrates mainly on health and safety and little mention is made of the support services available within the college, equal opportunities issues, complaints procedures, or the colleges' rules. All trainees receive a handbook but this is written for full-time students and some parts of it do not apply to work-based trainees. Some trainees are unaware of the college rules and only find out about them when the rules are infringed.

Management of training

Grade 4

31. The head of the training unit, who was appointed in June 1999, manages the colleges' construction, engineering and foundation for work training programmes. There is a full-time head of training, a full-time contract manager, and a full-time and two part-time administrative assistants. The training unit is responsible for all administration relating to the training programmes, marketing, recruitment, work placements and trainees' progress reviews, and arranging attendance at off-the-job training. The early-years and care programmes are managed by a department within the college known as the sector of health and care. Early in 1999, college

senior managers identified weaknesses in the management of the construction, engineering and foundation for work training programmes. These problems included weaknesses in the administration of the programmes and failure to rectify weaknesses identified by Essex TEC. To address these issues, a new head of the unit was appointed and a comprehensive review of the work of the unit was undertaken. The unit was restructured; staff roles and responsibilities were redefined; and a new role of contract manager was created. Detailed action plans have been developed. There are 27 staff in the unit including managers, instructors, lecturers and technicians responsible for the training and assessment of trainees including those subcontracted from other training providers. Staff in the unit also undertake some college teaching. The college achieved the Investors in People award in 1999. Some of the aspects of provision identified as strengths in the self-assessment report represent no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective management of change
- ◆ effective working relationships with internal and external partners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate health and safety monitoring of work placements
- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient staff appraisal

32. The actions plans developed by the training unit are realistic. Recent changes have been managed successfully. There are regular meetings involving staff in the training unit and in the sector of health and care to discuss and share good practice. Open debate is encouraged and individuals are encouraged to share their views and ideas. The college's senior management team has agreed that, from September 2000, all tutorial staff involved with trainees on government-funded programmes are to have 20 hours each year for each trainee to carry out workplace visits, assessments, internal verification, health and safety monitoring and to provide support to employers and workplace supervisors. Instructors' contracts of employment have been changed to enable training to be provided during the college's summer break. A pilot scheme has been run this year for trainees on the foundation for work programme and for advanced and foundation modern apprentices in information technology key skills. The results and effectiveness of the pilot scheme are being analysed. Working relationships and communication within the training unit, across the college and with most external partners are good. Management and staffing structures are clear.

33. Health and safety checks of workplaces are undertaken before trainees start a work placement. A checklist ensures that all workplaces are assessed against the same criteria. However, staff sometimes fail to record employers' liability and motor insurance numbers and expiry dates. Many of the areas that trainees work in are classified as medium or high risk requiring work-placement checks every six or three months respectively. This has not occurred. Many workplaces have not had a formal health and safety check for 14 months. College staff are expected to carry out health and safety checks when visiting trainees. However, there has been no formal check of the health and safety knowledge, understanding and competence of these staff. Checks that have taken place are not properly recorded. Staff are required to complete a workplace health and safety monitoring form designed to highlight issues of concern and record agreed actions and timescales. Staff do not refer to the notes of previous checks and are not aware of outstanding issues. Where areas of concern have been identified, monitoring systems are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that they are dealt with.

34. There is inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. There is no monitoring of the training which trainees receive in the workplace. Assumptions are often made by college tutors about what trainees have learnt and what they are expected to do in the workplace. Employers are not sufficiently aware of the content of the off-the-job training programme. There is no check to ensure that the off-the-job training complements and supports trainees' role in the workplace. The college requires that all staff should have an appraisal once every two years and a review of progress in the intervening year. This has not occurred in the training unit. To date most staff have not been appraised or reviewed.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

35. Chelmsford College has quality assurance arrangements which are intended to cover all its activities including work-based training. The procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the director of quality and development. The college regularly audits the implementation of its quality assurance arrangements. This process involves the observation of training. There is a corporation quality committee which meets four times a year to consider quality assurance issues across all the college's activities. Quality assurance is included on the agenda of the managers' meetings within the training unit. Written records of meetings are kept. There is a college-wide internal verification system. Implementation of the system is the responsibility of the internal verification and assessment manager. There are regular meetings of internal verifiers across the college. External verifiers' reports are sent directly to the director of quality and development, who then copies them to all appropriate individuals, including the head of the training unit. The views of trainees and employers on the effectiveness of the college's training programmes are collected regularly. All staff from the training unit contribute to the self-assessment of the work-based training programmes. The self-assessment report gives a clear description of the quality assurance arrangements. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective self-assessment
- ◆ good action-planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inappropriate quality assurance procedures for some work-based training
- ◆ insufficient feedback from trainees and employers

36. The college has been carrying out self-assessment for several years. The process is effective. Staff gather appropriate evidence and evaluate it well. Most of the judgements in the self-assessment report are sound. Staff have a good appreciation of the standards they should be achieving. The self-assessment report is self-critical where necessary and also identifies most of the key strengths. The report acknowledges that there is a need for more evaluation of the quality of training in the workplace. There is good action-planning leading to continuous improvement. There are a series of action plans aimed at achieving short-term improvements. These focus on a variety of issues including training, assessment and trainee support. Their implementation and impact are frequently evaluated. Issues requiring action are identified from a variety of sources. All staff contribute to the process. The plans are regularly updated. The action plans feed into the self-assessment process. Actions result in improvements. For example, there have been significant improvements in retention rates. The average retention rate in construction since 1997 is 67 per cent and in engineering it is 77 per cent. The retention rate for trainees who have started since April 1999 is 90 per cent in both areas.

37. The quality assurance system applies to all of the college's activities. Some procedures are difficult to apply to work-based training. Others are applicable only in the college and not in the workplace. For example, the quality assurance procedures relating to assessment make no reference to work-based assessment and do not provide guidance on the type and quality of work-based evidence required. Progress-review procedures make no reference to progress reviews conducted in the workplace or provide guidance on employers' involvement in progress reviews. The collection of trainees and employers' views on the quality of the training programmes is inadequate. The process is the same for trainees as for part-time students and is based on a 10 per cent sample. Given the relatively small number of trainees, the sample size is inappropriate. Similar difficulties are evident in the employer surveys. The college plans to extend its surveys to cover all trainees and employers and to increase employers' involvement in the training programmes through the introduction of employers' meetings.