



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

Southport College

SUMMARY

Southport College provides satisfactory training in hairdressing. Its hospitality training provision is less than satisfactory. Hairdressing trainees produce a high quality of practical work. College and workplace resources for training in hairdressing and hospitality are good. In both occupational areas, assessors make insufficient use of workplace evidence. There is no assessment of hospitality trainees' key skills evidence. Equal opportunities is well promoted within the college. The monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is unsatisfactory. Trainees have access to a range of support services at the college. There are inadequate arrangements for initial assessment. There is insufficient co-ordination between training undertaken at the college and that done in the workplace. Workplace supervisors are inadequately involved in the training and assessment process. Arrangements for assuring the quality of work-based training are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good resources for on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of training opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ comprehensive review of equal opportunities policy and procedures
- ◆ very good individual guidance for trainees
- ◆ effective monitoring of off-the-job training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ no key skills assessment for hospitality trainees
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ ineffective strategies to recruit under-represented groups
- ◆ inadequate initial assessment of basic skills
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance of work-based training

INTRODUCTION

1. Southport College is a further education college situated close to the centre of the seaside town of Southport, Merseyside. The college has 303 full-time equivalent staff, 171 of whom are teaching staff. The college was formed in 1983 from the merger of Southport Technical College and the local arts school. The college provides further and higher education, to around 14,000 students each year. Approximately 2,000 students are on full-time courses. The college attracts students from all age groups, although approximately 75 per cent are aged 25 years or over. Courses are offered in all of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. The levels taught range from basic skills to degree courses franchised from local universities.

2. There is a sixth form college three miles away from Southport College and other further education colleges in the surrounding towns of Bootle, Skelmersdale, Leyland and Preston. There are secondary schools with sixth forms in Southport, Ormskirk, Formby and Maghull. The local education authority of Sefton supports two special schools with students over 16 years of age. There are also a number of private schools and private training providers in the local area.

3. The college has a contract with Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships and other work-based training programmes for young people and adults. There are 30 trainees comprising 16 advanced modern apprentices and 14 foundation modern apprentices. Eighteen trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hair and beauty and nine trainees are working towards NVQs in hospitality. The remaining three trainees are working in accountancy and administration. Owing to the small number of trainees, the occupational area of business administration was not subject to a separate inspection. TEC-funded off-the-job training is integrated with the mainstream part-time day-release classes provided by the vocational departments at the college. The vice-principal for corporate services holds overall responsibility for the TEC-funded training.

4. The college also offers New Deal training programmes funded by the Employment Service. There are three New Deal clients. Two are doing NVQs in motor vehicle engineering and one is working on gas services installation and maintenance.

5. Southport has a population of approximately 94,000. The town lies within the metropolitan borough of Sefton, which has a population of around 385,000. Although relatively affluent, it has some areas of social deprivation. The college receives funding to assist in the economic regeneration of the area. Enrolments at the college reflect the lack of heavy industry locally and the predominance of service industries, particularly those relating to leisure, tourism and the caring occupations. The largest employment sectors are public administration, education and health. Southport College is one of the largest employers in the area. The

average age of the local population is increasing at a higher rate than the national rate.

6. Minority ethnic groups make up approximately 1 per cent of the population in Sefton and West Lancashire. This is lower than the proportion nationally, which stands at 5.2 per cent. In October 2000, the unemployment rate in Sefton was 5.8 per cent compared with the national figure of 3.4 per cent. In 2000, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Sefton was 48.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. The self-assessment process forms part of the college's quality assurance arrangements. The process is co-ordinated by the quality services manager. It involves contributions from individual staff members, records of observation of teachers' performance, results of student surveys and the reviews of team performance against targets. During the February half-term break all college teams spend two days working on their self-assessment report. The findings of the self-assessment process are checked through an internal inspection process. In the spring of 1999, the quality services manager and the training programmes manager attended a workshop on the self-assessment process for work-based training. College staff involved in work-based training were made aware of the Training Standards Council's inspection requirements. In May 2000 the college produced a single self-assessment report to cover both FEFC- and TEC-funded training. The report is structured to comply with the requirements of the FEFC inspection process. It includes a section on equal opportunities. There is inadequate focus on the work-based training in the self-assessment report. Shortly before inspection, the college produced additional self-assessment reports for the work-based training undertaken in the two occupational areas being inspected. The self-assessment grades for the two occupational areas are the same as those given in the original report.

8. Four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at Southport College in November 2000. Inspectors interviewed 21 trainees and made visits to 12 of the 24 workplaces used by the college. They met with 11 workplace managers or supervisors and interviewed 23 members of the college's staff. Twenty-one trainees' files and eight portfolios were examined by the inspection team. Other paperwork reviewed included contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, minutes of meetings, promotional literature, assessment materials, induction packs, management procedures and quality assurance evidence. Inspectors observed one review in the workplace, and observed and graded eight training sessions.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hospitality		4	0			4
Hair & beauty		1	3			4
Total	0	5	3	0	0	8

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hospitality

Grade 4

9. There are nine trainees on hospitality programmes. Three are advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3. Two of these are advanced craft food preparation trainees and one is on a programme in restaurant supervision. The remaining six trainees are foundation modern apprentices taking level 2 NVQs in food preparation. All trainees are employed locally in restaurants, public houses and a hospital. Enrolment generally takes place at the start of the college year. However, arrangements are made to allow trainees to join a group at a later stage. Trainees attend college on a day-release basis during the normal college term times. At induction, trainees are issued with a programme of work for the year. Training and assessment is undertaken in the college. There are two practice kitchens, one production kitchen and a restaurant. Trainees are trained and assessed by experienced and qualified college staff. Assessment normally starts in the second year of the course. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and four weaknesses. Inspectors considered several of the strengths to be no more than normal practice or more closely related to generic aspects of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses and identified a further weakness on achievement rates. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive and well-equipped training facilities
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ well-planned training in the workplace

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no key skills assessment
- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ poor achievement rates

10. The college's resources in the hospitality sector have recently benefited from a major refurbishment. A new 70-seater restaurant and associated production kitchen provide an excellent training resource. The restaurant is open to the public for four days and evenings each week and the weekly plans for trainees' work include time spent in these areas. Trainees produce a range of dishes using all fresh produce. They work to realistic deadlines, and are required to produce food of a standard to satisfy paying customers. Demonstrations and teaching take place in practice kitchens modelled on a working kitchen environment. Both sets of kitchens are very well resourced with modern machinery, stoves, fridges, freezers and utensils.

11. The menus used are thoughtfully planned to ensure that trainees cover of all aspects of the NVQ range. Menus are decided in advance for each college term, so the trainees know what they will be doing each week. Off-the-job training is well planned and presented. Tutors clearly demonstrate, in small stages, how to make each of the menu dishes. The trainees are asked to complete each stage themselves. Expert assistance is available to trainees at all times. Before moving onto the next stage, the tutor ensures that trainees understand what they have just done and why. Theory sessions are well taught, with creative use of appropriate background information. For example, trainees making Bakewell tart were told historical stories relating to the product. Contributions from trainees are actively sought and encouraged during sessions.

12. Work placements are carefully selected, and are well matched to the qualifications the trainees are undertaking. College tutors make a careful assessment of which NVQ units each trainee will be able to cover in the workplace. Workplace restaurants and kitchens are well resourced and offer trainees a breadth of experience in good commercial environments. Employers are flexible in their approach to on-the-job training, and will change their menus to accommodate particular assessment requirements.

13. All trainees are on foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships and key skills form an integral part of their qualification framework. However, key skills do not form part of their training programmes. Key skills are listed on advanced modern apprentices' individual training plans but are not scheduled to be assessed until the end of the programme. Many opportunities for gathering naturally occurring key skills evidence are therefore missed. College staff are unclear as to the key skills requirements in the framework for foundation modern apprentices. Key skills do not form part of the off-the-job training and no attempt is made to develop or assess key skills in the workplace. Trainees are informed about key skills during the induction programme but they have little understanding of key skills.

14. The majority of assessment takes place in the college during off-the-job training sessions. Many opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed. Catering tutors visit trainees in the workplace six times a year. Assessments are not planned to coincide with these visits. They only occur if the trainee is involved in an activity appropriate for assessment while the tutor is there. Little use is made of trainees' accounts of their activities in the workplace, or of witness testimony.

15. Trainees on hospitality programmes make slow progress, and a high proportion of trainees leave without completing their qualification. Since 1998, seven trainees have started an advanced modern apprenticeship. Four trainees left training with no qualifications and three remain on the programme. Of the 12 foundation modern apprentices who have started training since 1999, five have left with no qualifications, one has converted to an advanced modern apprenticeship and six are still in training. The only achievements recorded since 1998 are by two trainees who have completed a level 2 NVQ.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

16. Southport College has 18 trainees on hairdressing programmes. There are seven foundation modern apprentices and 11 advanced modern apprentices. Twelve of the trainees are on programmes leading to NVQs at level 2 and six trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3. Trainees are employed in a variety of salons located within a five-mile radius of Southport. Most of the trainees are recruited directly by their employers who then refer them for training at the college. Trainees attend the college one day a week during term time for theory sessions, key skills development and assessment, practical training and assessment, individual tutorials and portfolio building. Trainees are targeted to take two years for the level 2 NVQ and a further year for the level 3 NVQ. Most assessment takes place off the job. The hairdressing programme leader visits the trainees at their workplaces twice a year and undertakes reviews of trainees' progress in the college. All staff involved in the off-the-job training are appropriately qualified and are vocationally experienced. Two are undertaking key skills qualifications. The self-assessment report included 14 strengths and four weaknesses. Several of the strengths were considered by inspectors to represent no more than normal practice. Some are more relevant to the generic areas. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses and identified another weakness. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ very good resources for on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ high standard of practical work by trainees
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ lack of integration of key skills assessment with the NVQ units
- ◆ low retention rates for level 2 trainees

17. The college has recently refurbished its hairdressing and beauty section. Resources are of a very high standard. There are two salons, both of which are modern and well equipped to current industry standards. Trainees use a range of professional hairdressing products. The range of clients seen and treatments offered in the college salons is extensive and provides opportunities for trainees to cover many aspects of the NVQ. Tutors pay close attention to health and safety and impress upon trainees the importance of rigorous practice in this area, for example with regard to the appropriate use of personal protective equipment such as aprons and rubber gloves for chemical treatments. Theory is taught in well-equipped classrooms.

18. Trainees are employed in a range of local salons, from modern high street to small family businesses. Trainees are currently employed across 15 workplaces, five of which have staff with appropriate assessor qualifications and three of them have staff with training qualifications. The salons are well equipped and a good variety of up-to-date hairdressing products is used. Most trainees receive on-the-job training. They attend regular, formal staff training sessions, during which they practise their skills on models brought into the salon.

19. Off-the-job training is well structured, with clear schemes of work for all programmes, and detailed plans for individual sessions. Trainers make good use of visual aids. Trainees working towards the level 3 NVQ evaluate some of their training sessions by completing a brief questionnaire. Data from the questionnaires are analysed and discussed by tutors. Trainees' progress through their qualification is systematically recorded. Trainers maintain an individual diary for each trainee, in which the trainees' progress is monitored. Trainees are encouraged to progress at a rate consistent with their ability. For example, one particularly able trainee has completed twice as many units as others starting their programme at the same time.

20. Trainers have very high expectations of trainees, and trainees' work, conduct and personal presentation are of a very good standard. Trainees are smartly and professionally dressed, both on and off the job. Trainees demonstrate competence and confidence in carrying out a wide variety of hair treatments, including modern styling, cutting and using waving and colouring techniques. Portfolios of work are well organised, with an appropriate range of evidence. Some portfolios demonstrate good use of information technology. Level 3 trainees make particularly good use of photographic evidence. Every April, the college hosts an internal competition for hairdressing trainees. The winners receive trophies and other prizes donated by a leading national product company. Trainees' successes are also celebrated at an annual awards ceremony, which is held at a local hotel. This is attended by employers, parents and friends, and is reported on in the local press.

21. Most practical assessments take place off the job. Trainees are assessed while working on clients at the college's salons. These assessments are well planned. Trainees are briefed thoroughly before their work is assessed and are given detailed verbal feedback afterwards. Insufficient use is made of work-based evidence. During visits to employers' salons, the college tutor assesses any NVQ evidence relating to reception work and the sale of products. Witness testimonies from the workplace are used as part of the assessment for some level 3 NVQ units. However, other opportunities to observe trainees' performance in the workplace, and to exploit naturally occurring evidence, are missed.

22. The teaching and assessment of key skills takes place during off-the-job training. Level 3 trainees and second-year level 2 trainees have two hours per week. First-year trainees have one hour per week. Key skills are taught unit by unit. The numeracy unit is not covered until the end of the college's third year of training. Neither the teaching nor the assessment of key skills are integrated with the NVQ. Many opportunities to use key skills evidence from the workplace are

missed. No attempt is made to use workplace supervisors to teach or assess key skills.

23. Retention and achievement rates on the level 3 programme are satisfactory. Of the 19 trainees who started between 1997 and 1999, three trainees left the programme with no further qualifications. Sixteen trainees (84 per cent) have achieved the level 3 NVQ. Five of these trainees have also completed the key skills requirements of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework. However, retention rates on the level 2 programme are low, and achievement is slow. Between 1997 and 1999, a total of 27 trainees started on level 2 NVQ programmes. Thirteen (48 per cent) of these trainees left the programme with no qualifications. Of the 17 trainees who started between 1997 and 1998, eight trainees have achieved the level 2 NVQ.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

24. Southport College has an equal opportunities policy which covers access, discrimination, harassment, ethnicity, gender and disability. The policy does not make specific reference to work-based training. The college section with direct responsibility for the management of work-based training has adopted the college's equal opportunities policy for its own use. This meets the requirements of the TEC. College staff and most trainees have a copy of the policy. The equal opportunities policy is explained to trainees during their induction. The college updates the disability statement annually and this is given to all staff, students and trainees. A senior manager in the college has responsibility for equal opportunities across the college, and chairs the college's equal opportunities committee. There are three or four meetings of the committee during each college term. There has been some student representation on the committee. There have been no trainees from minority ethnic groups on work-based training programmes over the last three years. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the region is approximately 1 per cent. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified another weakness relating to the lack of monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive review of equal opportunities policy and procedures
- ◆ effective staff training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ ineffective strategies to recruit under-represented groups

25. During the last six months there has been a thorough review of the equal opportunities policy and procedures. The need for the review was identified through formal and informal feedback from new members of staff during induction. New staff could not clearly identify their role in implementation of the college's equal opportunities policy. The equal opportunity committee undertook some research and investigated policies from other organisations. Following the review they produced a revised draft policy statement. This statement was circulated, for consultation, to all college staff and presented to the senior management team for approval. All staff in the college were supplied with a copy of the revised policy statement and implementation guidelines. The new policy clearly identifies the role of each staff member in ensuring equality of access to potential students and ensuring equal access in terms of curriculum, assessment, support services and resources. There are effective policies and procedures in place to protect staff and trainees against discrimination and harassment at the college.

26. Most college staff have received recent and effective training in equal opportunity issues. The majority of staff who are directly involved with the work-based trainees have received this training from an external consultant. A key member of the college's work-based training staff, the person responsible for conducting the reviews of trainee progress in the workplace, has not undertaken any training on equal opportunities. The training has led to the production of good learning materials which are used in raising trainees' awareness of equal opportunities during their induction programme. Trainers have broken down the college policy statement into a format that aids trainees' understanding. Trainers are also in the process of developing an equal opportunities questionnaire to be used during tutorials with trainees. The purpose of this is to reinforce trainees' understanding of equal opportunities issues such as discrimination, prejudice, harassment and the complaints procedure. This is not yet in use, and it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Most trainees demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities issues. They are clear about the complaints procedure.

27. Many of the college's resources are accessible to people with physical disabilities. The college's management is aware of an overall gender imbalance and is developing a strategy to attract more men onto college courses. Funding has been secured to commission a research project to establish the reasons why the college is unsuccessful in recruiting disaffected men under the age of 25 years.

28. The college's staff carry out insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Employers are not systematically checked to confirm that they have an equal opportunities policy. In the college's service agreement with the employer there is a section for the employer to sign confirming that they support the colleges' commitment to equal opportunities. However, once they have signed this, there is no subsequent check on employers' adherence to the policy. The college's staff do not work with employers to raise their awareness of equal opportunities. Although equal opportunities is sometimes mentioned during reviews of trainees' progress, the discussion is insufficient to improve trainees' understanding of equal

opportunities or to ensure that they are aware of their rights in the workplace and are protected from discrimination.

29. Men are under-represented on hairdressing programmes. Women are under-represented on food preparation programmes in the hospitality area. The college's strategies to deal with this under-representation have been ineffective. Promotional materials do not attract people from minority groups. Staff have made insufficient links with relevant external agencies and minority ethnic groups. The college does not have recruitment targets for areas of under-representation.

Trainee support

Grade 4

30. Most trainees are recruited onto the college's work-based training programmes after they have found employment. Induction to the training programme is given on the first day in college. It lasts for four hours and covers course content, evidence collection, equal opportunities and additional support. There is no initial assessment of trainees' basic skills. Reviews of trainees' progress are conducted in the workplace by a college administrator once every 12 weeks. Visits to the workplace are also made by assessors. The frequency of these visits varies across occupational areas. Trainees attend tutorials during off-the-job training, at which their progress is discussed, and action plans agreed. The self-assessment report included 10 strengths, many of which related to the support systems for full-time students. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths apply to trainees. They did not agree with the three weaknesses given but identified other weaknesses specifically related to trainees. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good individual guidance for trainees
- ◆ wide range of specialist support services

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of trainees' basic skills
- ◆ inadequate initial assessment of trainees' key skills
- ◆ inadequate review process

31. Trainees receive a clear and thorough introduction to their training programme. Before the programme starts, an assessor visits the trainee and employer in the workplace, and provides detailed information about the NVQ and how the training will be organised. If they apply for a place during term time, the prospective trainee is invited to observe off-the-job training sessions. An effective working relationship between the tutor/assessor and trainee is established early in the programme. Trainees receive good individual support throughout their

programmes. They have one-to-one tutorials with their assessor during off-the-job training sessions. Constructive advice is given on all aspects of their training, and about progression.

32. The college's learning resource centre has a well-equipped library with a wide range of books and videos for the occupational areas. Trainees have access to the Internet, learning materials on compact discs, and photocopying facilities. At induction, trainees are issued with a college year diary, which lists all the services available, and guidelines on how to access them. These services include careers guidance, financial advice, assistance with finding accommodation, childcare support, and advice on additional funding and counselling. Specialist staff visit the trainees in the classroom to answer their queries. Additional support, including learning support, is provided for those who wish to make use of it.

33. Trainees do not receive any initial assessment of their basic skills needs when they start their programme. Full-time students' basic skills are systematically assessed at entry but this system is not extended to work-based trainees. Trainees are accepted onto their chosen programme on the basis that their job role matches the qualification. The application form filled in by prospective trainees asks them to supply details of their previous experience and qualifications, but this information is not taken into account when the trainee's individual training plan is drawn up. The college has no systematic way of establishing trainees' learning support needs. Some course tutors have identified trainees who require additional learning support, and support has been offered to trainees. However, this approach is reactive and is insufficient to ensure that all trainees receive the support they need.

34. All trainees are working towards advanced or foundation modern apprenticeships, and key skills are a requirement of their programmes. The college has been very slow to introduce initial assessment of trainees' key skills. In September 2000, the hairdressing section introduced the initial assessment of key skills for new entrants. There is still no initial assessment of key skills for hospitality trainees.

35. Reviews of trainees' progress are undertaken in the workplace, once every three months. The staff member carrying out workplace review is not qualified or experienced in the occupational areas involved in work-based training. This review process is normally conducted on an individual basis with the trainee. Employers' representatives do not normally attend the meetings. The review process is not well informed by the use of current and accurate data on trainees' progress. It is primarily used to comply with TEC contractual requirements in monitoring health and safety and checking that trainees are still on the programme. Action plans are of a general nature, and contain phrases such as 'continue with portfolio'. These reviews are not used to set targets for trainees' activities in the workplace. A copy of the review document is kept in trainees' personal files at the college. In addition to these progress reviews, occupational tutors carry out reviews with trainees. These take place every six months in the case of the hairdressing trainees, and are eight-weekly for hospitality trainees. The reviews are used to prepare action plans. Employers are insufficiently involved in the occupational reviews, and hospitality

employers do not receive a copy of the review. Overall, the process for reviewing trainees' progress is not adequately structured, or effectively managed.

Management of training

Grade 4

36. TEC-funded work-based training currently comprises 0.2 per cent of total college enrolments. The management of work-based training is closely integrated with the rest of the organisational structure of the college. There is no separate training department, and trainees are fully integrated as students of specific occupational areas. There is a training programmes manager, who reports to the college vice-principal (corporate services), and whose responsibilities include liaison with TECs and college departments, trainee enrolment and induction, and the contractual work place reviews. All staff have written job descriptions and undertake an annual appraisal which is linked to organisational performance targets and staff development priorities. The college gained the Investors in People Standard in 1999 and was re-accredited in 2000. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses that were no more than normal practice. Inspectors found further weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good internal communication
- ◆ effective staff appraisal

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient use of management information data
- ◆ insufficient involvement by most employers

37. The college's managers have an open, approachable style and promote effective internal communication throughout the college. Good use is made of a wide network of meetings to provide staff with information on issues affecting their roles and responsibilities. Meetings are arranged to an agreed schedule, and are recorded. Members of the college's senior management team routinely attend departmental meetings to hear staff's views, and to contribute to the flow of information. College staff's knowledge of corporate events and activities is further increased by the publication of a college newsletter every two weeks, and a fortnightly bulletin of activities. The newsletter is particularly effective in acknowledging the contribution to college life made by individual members of staff.

38. Staff's roles and responsibilities are well defined, and employees are clear about their lines of accountability. The college takes a well-organised approach to staff appraisal and staff development. The current staff appraisal system was introduced in 1998, and applies to all full-time and fractional staff. Each member of staff has an annual appraisal with their line manager. The appraisal is used to review individual performance over the last 12 months, and evaluates individual performances against set targets. Performance targets and staff development needs are agreed for the next 12-month period, and progress is monitored by a review after six months. Appraisal provides an effective means of identifying individuals' staff development needs, taking into account the requirements of the college's strategic plan. Good use is made of individual employees' strengths and interests. Although part-time staff are not formally appraised, their training needs are identified through a systematic survey of their training needs which is conducted in November each year.

39. On-the-job training is not effectively co-ordinated with the training, learning and assessment which takes place at college. Training sessions in the college are structured to meet the needs of the group as a whole. Insufficient account is taken of individual trainees' experience in the workplace. Employers are given inadequate information about their trainees' progress off the job. They receive a copy of the curriculum to which the college is working but do not receive information relating to the individual training sessions attended by trainees.

40. Southport College does not systematically record or analyse management information on work-based trainees. Systems for monitoring trainees' progress are inadequate. Managers are not fully aware of the performance of individual trainees, or groups of trainees. Information about trainees' achievement is not readily available, and the college's management information systems sometimes provide conflicting information about the current number of trainees on programmes. Information on the progress of trainees is not adequately used by managers to monitor staff's performance or to make strategic decisions about work-based training programmes. The college makes insufficient use of data to evaluate trainees' achievement and retention rates by occupational area. It is difficult for staff or managers to specify weaknesses in terms of occupational areas, to draw up plans for improvement, or to measure improvement using objective criteria.

41. Employers are not adequately informed by the college's staff about the full extent of their responsibilities with regard to their trainees' NVQ training. They see their role as providing a place of employment, with NVQ training taking place off the job. When staff from the college assess an employer to determine their suitability as a work placement, they do not adequately explain the practical implications of what is involved. Employers are not told that they should have an on-the-job training plan. They are not clearly informed by the college about their role regarding assessment in the workplace, or about the importance of their attendance at reviews of trainees' progress. Many employers have little understanding of key skills.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

42. Quality assurance procedures have been developed over a number of years by the college. The quality assurance system is linked to the college's strategic-planning process, and quality assurance procedures are subject to annual review. The review process is managed by a quality services manager. The college has a quality standards committee, which monitors and directs changes to quality assurance procedures, and reports to the senior management team. The quality assurance arrangements meet the requirements of Merseyside TEC and of awarding bodies. The self-assessment report was written by the quality services manager after consultation with staff in the college. The self-assessment report for quality assurance includes eight strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some strengths and weaknesses but identified other weaknesses relating to work-based training. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-resourced quality assurance process
- ◆ effective evaluation of off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice
- ◆ inadequate systems for obtaining feedback from trainees and employers
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance of work-based training

43. The emphasis placed on quality assurance within the college is reflected in the resourcing and support provided for the quality system. The quality services manager was appointed in 1998. Since being appointed, this manager has reviewed and improved the college's quality assurance procedures. Each member of staff is allowed two days each year to take a full part in the self-assessment process. The practice of internal inspection has been introduced, and staff have been trained to carry this out regularly and effectively.

44. There are good arrangements for monitoring the quality of training in the college. High standards are maintained by staff. Effective use is made of direct observation of classroom and workshop training sessions. Staff who have been observed receive detailed feedback. Action plans are drawn up, including support for staff development, to address any areas of weakness identified.

45. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. There is a clear policy for internal verification and sufficient qualified staff are involved in carrying it out. The consistency of assessment practice is monitored through regular, cross-college meetings of internal verifiers. Effective action is taken to address issues raised through internal verification

46. There are examples of good practice in some occupational areas. However, these are not systematically shared across the college. For example, staff in one occupational area have developed a good system for monitoring trainees' progress, but this has not been adopted in other areas. Quality team meetings, which are part of the college's programme review and monitoring systems, are not used to share good practice, and there are no other forums for sharing good practice within the college.

47. The views of trainees, employers and work supervisors are not systematically gathered. The college has some strategies for gathering data from students, including a formal survey in November each year. However, these involve random sampling, and there is no means of ensuring that the views of work-based trainees will be represented. The data requested by these surveys do not focus on work-based issues. The college has only recently begun to gather the views of employers. The questionnaire given to employers does not ask sufficiently focused questions to elicit information of value in improving work-based training programmes.

48. The proportion of TEC-funded work-based trainees, compared with full-time students on college programmes is small. Quality assurance procedures do not allow for sufficient focus on those aspects of work-based training which distinguish it from other college training programmes, such as workplace training and assessment, employers' involvement in the training programme, and reviews of trainees' progress in the workplace. The quality assurance manual contains a range of procedures, but none are directly aimed at the workplace. The college has paid insufficient attention to the specific requirements of work-based training. There is no systematic process for monitoring the quality of training given to trainees in the workplace. Training undertaken in the workplace is not subject to regular and direct monitoring by the college's staff. There is no written procedure for carrying out progress reviews for work-based trainees, nor is there a procedure to monitor the review process or the results of progress reviews.

49. In its self-assessment process the college does not use sufficient feedback from trainees and workplace supervisors. The report lacks a detailed analysis of achievement and retention rates for work-based trainees. The report sections specially produced for the two occupational areas inspected accurately identify several of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors but the grades given do not reflect the weight of the weaknesses. The report sections on the generic areas lack focus on issues relating to work-based training. In its self-assessment and action-planning processes, the college places insufficient emphasis on work-based training.