



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2000

# West Nottinghamshire College Training Agency

## SUMMARY

West Nottinghamshire College Training Agency provides good training in agriculture, construction, business administration, customer service and care. Trainees take advantage of the comprehensive facilities available at the college. It provides satisfactory training in engineering, manufacturing and hairdressing. The off-the-job training is good, but there is not enough assessment in the workplace. There is a well-written equal opportunities policy and clear procedures which protect trainees from unfair treatment. However, there is insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Some training plans and progress reviews are not fully utilised. The management and the quality assurance of training are both satisfactory, with well-planned training and qualified and experienced staff. Some trainees, employers and staff are unclear about who manages the work-based training. The on- and off-the-job training is not well co-ordinated and there is not enough feedback collected from trainees and employers about their perceptions about the quality of training. Self-assessment has raised the profile of work-based training in the college and has already led to several improvements for trainees.

### GRADES

| OCCUPATIONAL AREAS             | GRADE |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Agriculture                    | 2     |
| Construction                   | 3     |
| Engineering                    | 3     |
| Manufacturing                  | 3     |
| Business administration        | 2     |
| Retailing & customer service   | 2     |
| Hair & beauty                  | 3     |
| Health, care & public services | 2     |

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good teaching in the college
- ◆ good training resources
- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ good variety of college support services used by trainees
- ◆ good strategic planning of training

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities information with trainees and employers
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ unclear management responsibility for trainees
- ◆ unsystematic quality assurance of work-based training

## INTRODUCTION

1. West Nottinghamshire College Training Agency (Agency) operates within West Nottinghamshire College. This is situated in Mansfield, 15 miles north of Nottingham. The college serves a local population of 300,000. The college has four main centres based in Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield. The Agency operates from the largest college site in Mansfield, with the hairdressing academy in the town centre. The Agency has a contract with North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and other work-based training for young people. Trainees work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs). There is a contract with the Employment Service for the New Deal options of full-time education and training, employment, Gateway and follow through. The college is a member of the New Deal consortium. From September 1997 to March 2000, the Agency and the hairdressing academy had separate contracts with the TEC but they now have a joint contract. There are 397 trainees in agriculture, construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, retailing and customer service, leisure and sport studies, hospitality, hair and beauty and health, care and public services. There are 16 New Deal clients in agriculture, engineering, business administration and care training. Most trainees are employed in local firms within a 25-mile radius of the college. They attend the college for one day each week for theory training, and join classes with other students. Trainees in agriculture are based at the college and use projects to gain work experience. The Agency has a training manager and nine staff, including the New Deal co-ordinator who is based at the Sutton in Ashfield site. The training manager reports to the college's director of resources, who reports to the senior management team and in turn the governing body. The college's curriculum staff are responsible for theory training and assessment, and the Agency's staff are responsible for co-ordinating on- and off-the-job training and monitoring the trainees' progress.

2. The area served by the college has declining manufacturing and engineering industry, much surrounding the closures of many coal pits, and an increase in the growth of the service sector. The highest concentration of manufacturing jobs is in Sutton in Ashfield, which employs 40 per cent of the local workforce. It is a designated area for redevelopment and assistance from European funding. Unemployment has decreased over the last year to 4.6 per cent in October 2000, which is higher than the national average of 3.4 per cent. Less than 1 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups. There is a growth in part-time jobs. Approximately 66 per cent of the local workforce has at least one NVQ. In the local workforce, six per cent have first degrees and one per cent have progressed to achieve higher degrees. Over half of the workforce holds qualifications in English and Mathematics. Computing qualifications are still uncommon, at 7 per cent of the workforce, and are held mainly by young people. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general



certificates in secondary education (GCSEs) in Nottinghamshire was 43.4 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The Agency produced its first self-assessment report in August and revised the report in September 2000 to include the grades it awarded its training. Self-assessment is an established process in the college, as it is part of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) requirements. Course teams reviewed their training at a curriculum level and summarised it. The Agency's training manager and the college's quality assurance manager collated all these sections of the report, and it was approved by the work-based learning management committee, the quality assurance management committee and the senior management team. The report was accurate in grading the training in five of the eight occupational areas. Two of the remaining three areas received higher grades and one received a lower grade. The four generic areas were all awarded lower grades by inspectors than those given by the college. The self-assessment report contains an action plan and the achievement and retention data for the last four years.

4. Nine inspectors spent a total of 45 days at the college in October. Hospitality training was not inspected separately because there were only six trainees. The TSC inspected the college jointly with the FEFC. The two teams shared information about curriculum areas and observations of teaching and training. Inspectors interviewed 60 employers, 221 trainees and five New Deal clients, and carried out 75 interviews with staff. They reviewed 71 portfolios and a variety of evidence including policies, procedures, minutes of meetings, teaching and learning materials, assessment and verification records and external verifiers' reports. Inspectors observed 10 training sessions and graded these.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

|                                | GRADE 1  | GRADE 2  | GRADE 3  | GRADE 4  | GRADE 5  | TOTAL     |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Agriculture                    |          | 1        |          |          |          | 1         |
| Construction                   | 1        |          |          |          |          | 1         |
| Engineering                    |          | 1        |          |          |          | 1         |
| Manufacturing                  |          |          |          |          |          | 0         |
| Business administration        |          |          |          |          |          | 0         |
| Retailing & customer service   |          | 1        |          |          |          | 1         |
| Hair & beauty                  |          | 1        | 2        |          |          | 3         |
| Health, care & public services |          | 2        | 1        |          |          | 3         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>1</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>10</b> |

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Agriculture

### Grade 2

5. Eleven trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 in amenity horticulture and basic skills qualifications at foundation level and level 1. The programme is based on full-time attendance at college for up to two years. The work-based element of training is provided through projects. One full- and three part-time staff undertake training and assessment in amenity horticulture. Training is given throughout the year at a small horticultural unit at the college's site in Sutton in Ashfield and on work-placement projects. These work placements include a premier league football club, golf courses and clients who commission landscape and maintenance work from the horticultural unit. Most assessment is carried out in the workplace by the college's staff. A part-time internal verifier visits monthly to verify trainees' work and to observe assessors. In the past three years, 19 trainees have enrolled, of whom one has achieved an NVQ at level 1 and one has entered employment directly from the programme. Five New Deal clients are working towards NVQs at level 2 in a range of amenity horticulture projects on the full-time education and training option. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report that access to a wide range of external sites and the high proportion of work-based assessment are strengths. Additional strengths and

weaknesses were identified, and inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given in the report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good practical training
- ◆ wide range of work-based training projects
- ◆ high proportion of work-based assessment
- ◆ good, occupationally relevant basic skills support

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor retention rate
- ◆ poor achievement rate

6. Practical training in amenity horticulture is good and makes use of a wide range of realistic work opportunities. The college has extensive links with businesses and organisations which provide a challenging range of training experiences. These include a premier league football club, a local non-league football club and several cricket and golf clubs which require sports-turf preparation. The college obtains contracts for hard and soft landscape work in private gardens and for local companies. This gives trainees real work experience in a sheltered environment, as they have the college's staff there to train them. Trainees are involved in all aspects of the contract, from initial site surveys through to completion. Training sessions are well organised, with an adequate amount of good resources available. A minibus is available to transport trainees and tools to sites. Protective footwear is supplied and waterproof clothing is available. Good attention is paid to health and safety. Trainees are closely supervised and a great effort is made to involve trainees fully in their tasks. During bad weather or when external work is not available, trainees work in the college and undertake theory training or work on their portfolios. Good use is made of this time, but trainees are not always aware in advance of what tasks they will undertake.

7. Most assessment is through the direct observation of practical activities in the workplace. Staff are qualified in both training and amenity horticulture. Basic skills training is given by specialist staff. Trainees are assessed as and when appropriate jobs become available which can offer suitable assessment opportunities. An assessment plan is agreed with individual trainees. The availability of opportunities sometimes leads to very short notice for assessment, but trainees are not assessed before they are ready. A standard job sheet describing the activity being assessed is completed and signed by the trainee and assessor. Assessment records are completed immediately following assessment. The trainee and the assessor sign off each completed unit as soon as assessment requirements are met. Related knowledge is assessed using standard questions in a workbook produced by the awarding body. In most cases, trainees are encouraged to write

down the answers to questions as part of the development of literacy skills. Verbal questioning is used where trainees have literacy difficulties, and the assessor records and initials the answers given in a workbook for the trainees. Internal verification is rigorous and includes direct observation of all assessors and the sampling of portfolio evidence.

8. Most trainees are working towards qualifications in numeracy and literacy at entry level. This training need is identified through initial assessment, although it is not recorded on trainees' individual training plans. Where possible, exercises which relate to amenity horticulture are used for the assessment of these basic skills and achievements are systematically recorded. Achievement of qualifications is not, however, systematically reported to the Agency. The information is kept within the occupational areas. In addition, basic skills and personal development support is provided by specialist staff. Individual trainees' learning needs are identified through an initial interview and achievement targets are set. These relate mainly to developing job-seeking skills. Some trainees are investigating skills needed for self-employment. New Deal clients are given a high level of support by horticulture staff. Some clients have been able to extend their option by up to 12 months to enable them to complete NVQs at level 2.

9. Retention and achievement rates are poor. All trainees require additional learning support to complete NVQs at level 2, if not level 1. Over the past three years, retention has averaged 37 per cent, although this has risen to 100 per cent for trainees starting during this contract year. In the past three years, one trainee has completed the individual training plan and has achieved an NVQ at level 1. Two trainees have achieved the required numeracy and literacy qualifications. Last year, three trainees achieved a literacy qualification but not the numeracy or occupational components. When trainees leave the programme early, they do not receive their portfolios from the college or gain certification for units they have achieved.

### **Construction**

### **Grade 3**

10. There are 129 trainees in construction. There are 54 training in electrical installations, 35 in plumbing, 25 in joinery, nine in brickwork, four in built environment, and two in painting and decorating. Most trainees are aged between 16 and 21. There are 87 advanced modern apprentices, 28 foundation modern apprentices and 14 trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. There are 39 trainees working towards NVQs at level 2, 82 working towards NVQs at level 3, and eight working towards NVQs at level 4. Most trainees are employed. Most trainees take aptitude tests as part of their initial assessment before being accepted on college-based courses of training. Trainees attend off-the-job training on one day each week. Half of the training day is practical work and the other half comprises theory. Trainees receive the rest of their training from construction companies, in areas including boatbuilding, plumbing, general construction, security alarm manufacture and electrical firms. While inspectors were unable to determine an accurate picture of retention and



achievement rates from the data available, it was clear that retention in the first year was between 51 per cent and 57 per cent, improving to not less than 72 per cent in subsequent years. At least 77 per cent of those who remain in training after year one achieve their qualifications. Many of the areas identified in the self-assessment report were descriptive accounts of procedures. The inspectors agreed with two of the seven strengths and all of the weaknesses. Four of the strengths were regarded as no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ good off-the-job resources

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ unsystematic recording of trainees' progress on the job

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*A house on the college's campus used to provide accommodation for a caretaker, but it has now been converted into a practical assessment centre for gas installation and maintenance. This provides a realistic environment in which trainees can practise their skills and for them to be assessed towards their NVQs.*

11. Trainees benefit from a wide range of off-the-job training to good industrial standards. Trainees receive well-written learning packages at the start of each period of training. The language and terminology are clear. Training is good and follows a specific schedule based on the college's timetable. The training is flexible enough to allow trainees to proceed at their own pace throughout the entire programme and to benefit from additional time and instruction where needed. Workshops are exceptionally well equipped and spacious and provide a good variety of project work, with numerous opportunities to simulate realistic working conditions. The college's staff are responsive to trainees' individual needs and requests, amending and extending individual programmes as appropriate. Off-the-job craft instructors, and supervisors in the work placements, have appropriate vocational experience and are well qualified in their trade areas. They closely supervise the trainees and encourage them to take responsibility for their work. Trainees are well motivated and value their training. They are sufficiently challenged to gain in self-confidence. There are good working relationships between the trainees, staff and employers. Learning packages allow trainees to check their understanding, and assessors use them to help determine whether trainees are competent and ready for assessment. Key skills are co-ordinated well with the vocational training. There is good monitoring of health and safety on and off the job. Trainees understand their qualification aims and requirements and the assessment process, although some are less clear about the progress they have made on their programmes. All trainees receive a health and safety induction, and health and safety information is regularly reinforced during their training. Internal verification is well co-ordinated, with some good internal verification practice being shared between staff.

12. Most trainees are assessed in the college in simulated situations rather than real work situations. The one notable exception is for gas fitters, where the assessment is carried out in a house on the college's campus so that trainees can experience work at a real site. In their first year of training, some trainees receive few formal assessments and so have little to show for their achievements should they leave before the year is completed. There is some key skills training in the workplace but no assessments. Despite the generally good quality of training, the on- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated. Trainees' progress is not systematically recorded, although individual trainees' files contain some tracking information. Trainees follow a standard training plan which is not modified to take into account their individual training needs, learning styles or prior experience. Some trainees with existing proven skills and knowledge in key skills are required to attend the key skills training sessions to repeat work they have covered in achieving existing qualifications. There is no long-term planning of training by employers and challenging targets are not set so as to encourage progress and prompt trainees to work towards completion. Reviews do not help the trainees to progress sufficiently. They are carried out by training staff who are not occupationally qualified or experienced, but who liaise with the construction staff.

### **Engineering**

### **Grade 3**

13. There are 28 trainees in this area. There are five advanced modern apprentices working towards motor vehicle NVQs at level 3 and 13 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2. The remaining six trainees on other work-based training programmes have work experience in local garages. There are four trainees working on higher national certificate programmes and also two New Deal clients. The apprenticeships usually last between two and three years. The apprentices are employed in local garages. All trainees are men. The training agency and the motor vehicle department of the college initially assess trainees. Initial induction is carried out by the motor vehicle department. Off-the-job training is given in the college one day each week and includes key skills training, engineering theory and practical training. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and four weaknesses. Inspectors regarded some of the strengths as no more than normal practice and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a grade which was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good off-the-job training resources
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent reviews of trainees' progress

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ poor retention rates

14. The resources at the college are good. There are two well-equipped workshops where trainees service the college's vehicles. The classrooms are close to the workshop and easily accessible to trainees. Trainees practice on a wide range of new and old vehicles in the workshops. Vehicle maintenance in the college's workshops, combined with the work they do with their employers, provides trainees with a good range of opportunities to learn and progress. Key skills training is integrated effectively into the vocational training. The standard of employers' premises is good, with modern servicing equipment used by trainees.

15. The off-the-job training is good, at a pace to suit the trainees and with a strong sense of discipline from the tutor. One group of trainees was observed learning how to make a gasket for a water-pump flange. Trainees enjoyed the session and were able to demonstrate their proficiency quickly and effectively. Another group was observed learning how to inspect the rear brakes on a van. Trainees are well motivated and keen to progress to the next level of the NVQ or technician courses. Trainees are on the appropriate courses according to their ability and work experience. The working relationship between trainees, employers and staff is good. Several of the employers have previously trained at the college. Induction to the training is good, and most trainees can remember the content of the session. Trainees are monitored in the workplace through quarterly visits from the Agency's staff.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Some foundation and advanced modern apprentices taking motor vehicle training act as mentors to school pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils visit the college once a week to have some motor vehicle training. This experience enriches the trainees' own learning and helps them understand the difficulties faced by these school pupils.*

16. In the first year, trainees are assessed in the college's workshops and not in the workplace. Some mature trainees who make faster progress are assessed on more complex activities and, if appropriate, this is conducted in the workplace. In the second year, the college's assessors visit trainees in the workplace on a monthly basis to assess their competencies. Employers provide witness testimony of their trainees' performance, but none are qualified as assessors. Trainees have to prioritise work which comes into the garages above that for their qualifications and cannot always fulfil their planned assessments. Any gaps in trainees' progress towards the qualifications are filled by arranging for appropriate assessment in the college's workshops.

17. The trainees' individual training plans are reviewed and updated each month. The tutors use the plans to monitor the trainees' progress. Employers and trainees do not refer to the individual training plans and do not use them to plan the on-the-job training. Employers receive an annual report from the college on their trainees' progress and are advised if any problems arise. The assessment and internal verification is systematic, with regular, minuted meetings for staff. The internal verifier's sample of records is monitored to ensure it covers trainees' work and NVQ units adequately. Assessment records are kept up to date.

18. Some trainees have been slow to complete their NVQs at level 2, and there have been difficulties in recruiting trainees onto NVQs at level 3. Trainees have found the 89 assessments required for the NVQ at level 2 to be demanding, and have been less inclined to progress further. The revised awards being introduced this year have fewer assessments, so may help to improve the statistics, but it is too early yet to see any evidence of this improvement.

19. Many trainees leave early without completing their training. During the past three years, between 14 per cent and 70 per cent of trainees remained in training, against a national average of 60 to 70 per cent. The trainees' achievement rates do not show clear trends over the years. Over the last three years, 54 trainees have begun training in motor-vehicle NVQs and 23 have either completed or are still in training.

20. The self-assessment report identified a weakness in the ineffective matching of trainees to the most appropriate programme. This has improved as a result of new initial assessment of trainees and interviewing procedures. Current trainees are all working on appropriate courses. The self-assessment report also recognised a difficulty in motivating trainees to learn key skills. This is not the case with current trainees. While some find learning key skills challenging, most recognise the importance of key skills to the achievement of their NVQs.

## **Manufacturing**

## **Grade 3**

21. There are 66 employed trainees in manufacturing, most of whom have been recruited by their employers. There are 60 advanced modern apprentices, five foundation modern apprentices and one trainee on another work-based training programme for young people. There are 45 trainees working towards engineering production qualifications, and seven trainees are working towards engineering manufacturing qualifications. Two trainees are working towards higher national certificate programmes equivalent to an NVQ at level 4. Nine trainees are working towards textile technician qualifications and three trainees are working with clothing machinery. Off-the-job training is given in the college one day each week. All assessment for NVQs at level 3 is conducted by the college's assessors in the workplace. One employer has a qualified workplace assessor and another is preparing to train two members of staff. Employers manufacture a range of items from lights, precision tools and garments to items for the aerospace industry. A curriculum manager of technology and two programme managers support trainees. A third manager is based at the textile training centre. Further support is provided by a team of engineering tutors, programme co-ordinators and assessors. Programme reviews are conducted by a member of the Agency's staff who visits trainees on their employer's premises every three months. Of the eight strengths identified by the Agency in the self-assessment report, inspectors did not find six. Another represented no more than normal practice. Inspectors found one of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, found another to be more appropriate to the generic aspects of training, and did not find a further three

weaknesses. Inspectors identified one additional strength and two weaknesses, and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ outstanding training resources
- ◆ good training opportunities at employers' premises

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no understanding of training programmes by trainees
- ◆ no ongoing on-the-job assessment
- ◆ missed opportunities for key skills assessment in the workplace

22. The college's advanced manufacturing technology centre, called 'the Engine', provides trainees with access to modern high-technology standard production equipment such as computer-aided design equipment, hydraulics, pneumatics and production control systems. Trainees currently use the Engine for training in computer-aided design and computer numeric control. In addition, training in basic manufacturing skills is well taught by qualified staff. The college is currently a lead partner in a European project for modern apprentices. When the scheme, involving five colleges in Western Europe, is fully operational, it will offer exchange study opportunities to trainees at these colleges.

23. Trainees have on-the-job training in companies with high-precision, high-quality manufacturing and production activities. Many of the employers strongly support the trainees' development. Trainees are offered and take up additional training, often beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship schemes, such as product-specific training, advanced welding techniques and multi-discipline techniques of manufacture. Some trainees also have fork-truck training and first aid training. Trainees are supported by delegated members of their employer's staff, who set realistic but demanding targets against clearly written internal training and development plans. Trainees are motivated by this variety of training. The rate of retention over the past three years is good at 86 per cent. Also, 77 per cent of trainees in this time have gained some level of qualification during their training.

24. Trainees do not understand the programmes they are following. They do not know the topics included in their scheme of work or the specific NVQ that they are working towards. They are unclear about the differences between progress reviews and assessments. On-the-job assessment is not planned with the trainee and they do not receive sufficient feedback after the assessment. The assessment practice is inconsistent between assessors, with some feedback given late and evidence not always clearly assessed. Trainees do not maintain assessment records and are unsure of the progress they make. There is no internal verification in the workplace. Trainees are assessed at the end of the NVQ training rather than the

development of their skills being observed during their training. The Agency acknowledges this weakness in part in the self-assessment report.

25. There are missed opportunities for the assessment of key skills in the workplace. The range and quality of work placements provide good chances for trainees to demonstrate their key skills training quite naturally on a daily basis, but this is not encouraged by the Agency's staff. Key skills are assessed in the college using assignments.

## Grade 2

### **Business administration**

26. There are 42 trainees and four clients in this area. In administration, there are 19 trainees, of whom 14 are advanced modern apprentices working at NVQs at level 3 and five are foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2. There are also two New Deal clients working towards NVQs at level 2. In accounts, there are 19 advanced modern apprentices working towards the accounting technician award, 13 at level 3 and six at level 4. In information technology, there are four advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3. In addition, there are two New Deal clients working towards information technology NVQs at level 2.

27. Administration advanced modern apprentices attend the college for off-the-job training and assessment on Wednesday evenings, and foundation modern apprentices attend on Thursdays all day. Trainees are based in a wide range of companies including a large facilities company which operates internationally and a regional brewery. Between 1997-98 and 2000-01 the retention rate was 81 per cent, and 82 per cent of administration trainees achieved an NVQ. In this period, two trainees have achieved all the targets on their individual training plans.

28. Accounts trainees are based in a range of companies such as an agricultural estate and with a building contractor. Trainees are supported by three programme tutors/assessors who train towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. All trainees start their NVQs at level 2. Off-the-job training is given at the college, at flexible times on Tuesdays and Thursdays with additional examination preparation on Saturday mornings. Trainees are assessed through national and local examinations. Between 1998-99 and 1999-2000, 74.5 per cent of Accounts trainees achieved an NVQ. The retention rate for the same period was 85 per cent. No trainees have completed their individual training plan.

29. Information technology trainees attend the college for off-the-job training and assessment on Wednesday afternoons. Trainees are based in a wide range of organisations including a welding company and the college's open learning centre. Between 1997-98 and 2000-01, the retention rate for information technology trainees was 88 per cent, and 51 per cent of trainees achieved an NVQ.

30. The self-assessment report identified six strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors found two of these strengths and all the weaknesses, although one

weakness was more relevant to management of training. Inspectors identified a number of additional strengths and weakness and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of work experience opportunities within the college
- ◆ comprehensive training resources
- ◆ good progression in key skills

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient recording of assessment and internal verification
- ◆ insufficient communication with employers

31. The college has been effective and imaginative in creating opportunities within the college for trainees to gain experience within realistic work settings. Foundation modern apprentices in business administration spend the initial period of their programmes working in a realistic office environment within the college. The office incorporates a reception point and a shop which is run on a commercial retail basis, selling office sundries and stationary to the college's staff and students. This is effective in assisting trainees to develop administrative skills such as for reception duties, in stock control and basic accounting skills, as well as providing opportunities for the development of customer service and retail skills. The office also provides printing and photocopying services as well as a text-processing service to departments throughout the college, and to some commercial customers. Trainees work in each area of the office and are able to develop a wide range of basic administrative and text-processing skills. Advanced modern apprentices can use the office to demonstrate competence in areas where they are unable to produce evidence from the workplace owing to the restrictions of their job roles. Information technology trainees are involved in the design and production of web pages for a local newspaper group. This is effective not only in developing technical competence but also provides trainees with valuable experience of working to commercial quality requirements and deadlines.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*The college recently set up a fictitious accountancy firm which uses the accounts from real companies (in confidence). Trainees use this to apply and test the theoretical knowledge they develop.*

32. There are comprehensive resources for trainees. The college's tutors are well qualified and occupationally experienced. Tutors review the effectiveness of their course materials and produce new and innovative course materials to assist trainees to develop their knowledge and understanding. The tutors have produced 'quick-start' guides to enable trainees to make an early start in using databases without having to become familiar with complex technical terminology. These types of course materials enable trainees to develop basic occupational skills quickly and increase their self-confidence in relation to more complex work activities as they progress through their qualifications. Trainees have ready access to up-to-date computers and there is a sufficient number to meet the needs of all trainees. In business administration, the software used by trainees exceeds the

industry standards and enables them to become familiar with the programmes which will become the industry standard of the future. In information technology, the college identified that trainees needed to develop Internet skills and made available industry standard software. Trainees can access a wide range of learning resources through the open learning centre within the college, and each occupational area has a substantial amount of reference material to assist trainees to meet the knowledge requirements of their programmes.

33. Trainees are making good progress towards the achievement of key skills qualifications. The structure of key skills training and assessment has recently been revised. The college has increased the time allocated for training in key skills, for example, in business administration to three hours each week. Trainees beginning the programmes have a computerised key skills assessment which identifies their learning needs and identifies appropriate workbooks to meet their specific learning needs. The workbooks are very well structured and designed. In addition, they are based upon occupationally relevant examples and tasks which trainees can relate to their experience in the workplace. Trainees are encouraged to use naturally occurring evidence from the workplace towards their key skills qualifications.

34. The assessment and internal verification practices do not comply with good practice requirements in two specific areas. In business administration and information technology, direct observations of trainees by assessors are used as a method of assessment. Assessors do not record a description of the observation they conduct and how trainees demonstrate the required competence. In addition, assessors do not record the questions they ask to identify trainees' knowledge and understanding of the tasks or the answers given by trainees, and trainees do not sign the assessment record. In information technology, this deficiency has been recognised and there is an action plan to remedy the deficiency. The internal verification system for the three occupational strands within the business administration sector does not effectively and systematically monitor the quality of assessment practice of each assessor across all units of the NVQs.

35. Some employers have little understanding of the training programmes and the structure of the qualifications trainees are working towards. Opportunities are missed for employers to provide appropriate work experience for trainees through job expansion and job rotation. The occupationally experienced tutors have insufficient contact with employers. Employers do not play a full role in planning on-the-job training to support trainees' NVQ progression. The college has taken steps recently to increase the contact between occupational tutors and employers, but it is too early to measure the impact and effectiveness of this initiative for trainees. Some tutors are not fully aware of the on-the-job training trainees receive and do not refer to trainees' individual training plans.



## **Retailing & customer service**

## **Grade 2**

36. There are 41 trainees of whom 12 are advanced modern apprentices and 29 are foundation modern apprentices working towards the customer service NVQs at levels 2 and 3. In addition, 54 hairdressing trainees are working towards the customer service NVQ at level 2 as part of their occupational course. Customer service training is the responsibility of the commercial services team in the college. The team also offers qualifications in retailing, distribution and warehousing and telephone sales, but has no trainees on these programmes at present. All trainees are employed within a variety of work environments across the local area including in-house at the college, external retail outlets, hairdressing salons, call centres, the licence trade, as well as filling reception and administrative posts. Assessment and internal verification is carried out in the workplace by the college's curriculum staff, while reviews are conducted by a placement co-ordinator every three months. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths in the self-assessment report and regarded the others as no more than normal practice. No evidence could be found to substantiate the weaknesses indicated, but inspectors found other weaknesses along with additional strengths. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given by the Agency in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent and effective support from assessors
- ◆ high rates of achievement for NVQs
- ◆ good resources

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor understanding of programmes by trainees and employers
- ◆ poor achievement rate of modern apprenticeship framework

37. Assessors visit trainees in the workplace once a week. These frequent visits enable trainees to make rapid progress towards achieving their qualifications. Visits are often conducted after normal working hours and at weekends. Assessors observe trainees' work activities, and help with portfolio development and evidence collection during each visit. Assessors provide clear explanations of the NVQs and key skills requirements. They follow good assessment practice, utilising a variety of methods to generate valid and reliable evidence. Advice and guidance is always available from any member of the college's commercial services team should the trainee's dedicated assessor be absent. Assessors give feedback at each visit and formulate an action plan with the trainee, containing clear points for trainees to address. Subsequent visits ensure that action points have either been met or are in the process of being addressed. Off-the-job training is given weekly

at the college and twice a month at the college's hairdressing academy in the centre of Mansfield. Assessors have good working relationships with employers, and have regular contact to discuss visits to trainees and assessment opportunities. All trainees and workplace supervisors are extremely pleased with the level of support they receive from assessors. The training trainees receive helps to enforce the importance of professional attitudes at work, and trainees develop a confident attitude in dealing with people which is valued by employers.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*Assessors use a laptop computer and a portable printer when visiting trainees in the workplace to produce assessment paperwork for trainees' portfolios. This sets a professional standard for trainees to follow in their collection of evidence for their portfolios.*

38. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices for the past three years was 56 per cent, 33 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. During the past two years, 32 per cent and 36 per cent of foundation modern apprentices stayed in training. Trainees' achievement of NVQs for advanced modern apprentices was 25 per cent for level 3 in 1999-2000 and 100 per cent for level 3 in 1997-98. All trainees achieved NVQs at level 2 in years between 1997-98 and 1999-2000. In 1999-2000, 84 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved NVQs at level 2, while 91 per cent achieved them in 1998-99.

39. The college's commercial services department has good resources for both assessment and off-the-job training. The hairdressing academy has a call-centre training room incorporating 10 personal computers, all loaded with industry standard software. In addition, a specialised software has been installed in the training room to enable trainees to hear their own voices, as received through a telephone call, in order to identify and rectify particular problems with their conversation. Each workstation has its own live telephone line with a headset, so can be used as a real working environment. Internet facilities are also available for trainees to use. There is presentation software, an interactive whiteboard, a television and video facilities available, along with custom-designed training packages for classroom activities. A digital camera and camcorder are available for assessors to use to collect additional evidence when observing trainees in the workplace.

40. Trainees take skills tests during their initial assessments so they can begin work on the correct programmes. They also undertake diagnostic tests to establish any individual development requirements they have for basic and key skills. Their progress towards their NVQs is monitored through the use of specifically designed achievement records. Assessors are observed for internal verification purposes, throughout the assessment process. Internal verifiers provide assessors with verbal and written feedback. They adhere to sample plans, and use tracking forms to ensure that they cover all units and assessment methods. These are regular internal verification standardisation meetings and copies of minutes are distributed to all assessors.

41. Trainees and employers have poor knowledge of the training scheme. Some trainees do not know whether they are on either a modern apprenticeship programme or undertaking an individual NVQ. Trainees are unaware of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework, particularly regarding the additional units they need to take. The requirements of the full framework are not given in the individual training plans. The induction process is ineffective in

explaining the framework and programme requirements to trainees. Some employers are unaware of the content of the off-the-job workshops and they also do not know the requirements of the trainees' training programme.

42. There is a poor rate of completion of the full modern apprenticeship framework. Some modern apprentices are leaving programmes early with no qualifications at all, while others are leaving partially qualified. No trainees have achieved additional occupational qualifications or key skills. To remedy this, all curriculum staff are currently undertaking key skills qualifications themselves through staff development, to enhance their understanding and to enable them to teach these subjects more effectively.

### **Hair & beauty**

### **Grade 3**

43. There are 54 trainees. There are 21 advanced modern apprentices, 21 foundation modern apprentices and 12 trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of the 21 foundation modern apprentices, 13 are employed. All trainees are following NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in hairdressing. Trainees also complete NVQs at level 2 in customer service during their training. Trainees are based in one of 41 local hairdressing salons. The trainees are visited in their salons at least every three months by one of the two work-placement officers in order to review their progress. Trainees attend the college's hairdressing academy on one day each week for off-the-job training, where they receive a mixture of theory and practical training. The hairdressing academy has only been established for two years and is operated as a commercial salon. Assessment is carried out during off-the-job training by one of the tutors responsible for the practical training. There are, however, two salons where trainees do not attend the college and all the training and assessment is carried out in the salons. This is conducted by a visiting tutor from the college. Recruitment is mainly through the careers service or trainees are referred directly from their salons. Trainees are encouraged to attend the hairdressing academy for taster courses and aptitude assessment before starting programmes. All trainees participate in an induction week where their initial level of key skills and occupational skills are assessed. Many of the strengths in the self-assessment report were found by inspectors to represent no more than normal practice. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good training accommodation and resources
- ◆ well-developed key skills training
- ◆ some good achievement of NVQs at level 2
- ◆ effective theory training

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ inadequate communication with employers
- ◆ some inadequate training for NVQs at level 3
- ◆ low retention of modern apprentices
- ◆ some poor attendance at off-the-job training

44. The hairdressing academy provides up-to-date accommodation which meets the requirements of the industry. The salon was fully modernised in 1998, with good equipment, and redecorated in August 2000 to maintain its professional environment. The hairdressing academy operates as a commercial salon serving the general public. It offers a comprehensive range of services. It has a good range of retail products displayed in the spacious and well-designed reception area. This salon is open for 50 weeks of the year and provides trainees with a good environment in which to develop and practice their hairdressing techniques. There is also good accommodation for theoretical training, and rooms are equipped with a wide range of teaching resources. There are good facilities for information technology, and computers are used during key skills training. These rooms contain several modern computers with Internet facilities and word-processing and spreadsheet software.

45. Staff are well qualified and occupationally experienced. Ninety per cent of staff are already qualified in teaching or working towards teaching qualifications and 50 per cent of staff have high-level qualifications in teaching. All staff are qualified assessors and most are qualified as internal verifiers. Staff's industrial experience includes 50 per cent having previously owned their own salons and 30 per cent having come from managerial positions within salons. Staff development is a high priority in the team. Staff's training needs are identified through the college appraisal system and systematically addressed.

46. Key skills training is effectively co-ordinated with vocational training. The staff have introduced a series of relevant key skills tasks and projects into the hairdressing programmes. Key skills are assessed at induction with an interactive key skills diagnostic test. Information technology key skills are taught in well-resourced computer rooms with the effective use of well-designed learning packs. Five staff are currently working towards key skills units themselves to give them a better understanding of how to teach and assess key skills. Three have already completed key skills units and are awaiting certification.

47. There have been some good achievements in hairdressing NVQs at level 2. Half the foundation modern apprentices completed NVQs at level 2 in 1998-99, and the one foundation modern apprentice in 1999-2000 also completed this. Over 90 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved NVQs at level 2 in 1997-98 and 1998-99, and 40 per cent achieved them in 1999-2000. Similarly, over half of

trainees on other work-based training programmes achieved their NVQs at level 2 over the last three years. Trainees stay in training for between 12 and 21 months.

48. There is some effective and well-planned theoretical training, which is supported by good learning packages for trainees. These packages have been developed by the college's staff. Most units of NVQs at levels 2 and 3 have specific learning packages. These materials are well designed. They incorporate good diagrams and the tasks set for trainees reinforce this learning. Trainees enjoy the theoretical training. Trainees make good use of the packages when they are completing written projects. There is good use of a range of teaching resources, but little use of videos to show demonstrations of work during practical sessions.

49. There is insufficient work-based assessment. There are a few qualified work-based assessors in some of the 41 work placements, but they are rarely used. The college's staff have assessed trainees in the workplace, but most are assessed during the off-the-job training at the hairdressing academy. Many trainees have suitable clients in their salons asking for hairdressing techniques on which trainees could be assessed, but these opportunities are not fully used. Progress by some trainees is delayed by this situation. The college has recognised this problem, and a tutor has started to carry out more assessments in the salons.

50. Some trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 are not receiving the appropriate level of practical training. They work on clients in the college's salon at a low level of ability and do not have sufficient opportunity to practise the advanced skills of cutting and colouring. Some trainees are demotivated by this problem and are unsure as to when they can achieve the NVQ. Recently, the college has increased the amount of practical training for trainees taking NVQs at level 3, but it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

51. Statistics on the retention rates for trainees show that a third of trainees on other work-based training programmes left early without qualifications. Half of all foundation modern apprentices left early without a qualification in 1998-99 and 45 per cent of advanced modern apprentices left early last year, with over half having achieved an NVQ at level 2 but not staying on to achieve NVQs at level 3. Some trainees' progress was impaired during the college's summer holiday when the regular tutors were not always available.

52. The hairdressing academy's communication with employers is unsatisfactory. Employers are not adequately involved in the off-the-job training. They do not understand the programmes that their trainees are undertaking and there have been no meetings organised to supply them with the necessary information. Opportunities are missed to build on the college's training when trainees are in the workplace. Employers do not understand the importance of the review process and the opportunities it affords to voice their concerns. Employers do not understand the content or relevance of key skills. Visits by the work-placement co-ordinators have not always been regular, adversely affected by one member of the team being on long-term sick leave and insufficient cover being arranged. Some employers have become isolated from the college. Employers have not always been notified

when their trainees have been absent from the off-the-job training and this has caused many problems. There is some poor attendance for off-the-job training. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

## Grade 2

### Health, care & public services

53. There are 26 trainees in this area. There are 14 advanced modern apprentices in early years childcare, all taking NVQs at level 3, and three foundation modern apprentices taking NVQs at level 2. There is one advanced modern apprentice in care taking an NVQ at level 3 and one foundation modern apprentice in care taking an NVQ at level 2. There are seven trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people taking NVQs in care at level 2. There are five New Deal clients on the employment option taking NVQs in early years and care, three at level 3 and two at level 2. Trainees are expected to complete their NVQs at level 2 in one year and their NVQs at level 3 in two years. Training is managed by the assessment centre manager for NVQs in care who oversees the work of assessors, tutors and programme co-ordinators. The assessment centre for NVQs in care is part of the college. Trainees attend the college for off-the-job training and key skills training once a week. Trainees work in local nurseries and residential care homes. Inspectors agreed with five of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They regarded the remaining strengths as no more than standard practice. Inspectors agreed with three of the weaknesses identified and found that the other weaknesses were resolved. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ effective peripatetic assessment
- ◆ good initial assessment
- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ good theory training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor achievement of key skills
- ◆ inadequate access to off-the-job training

54. Trainees have an initial interview and assessment to establish their potential caring skills, their preferred learning methods and their awareness of equal opportunities. Information from this initial assessment is used to find a suitable work placement for trainees and is used when selecting the teaching and learning styles of the college-based training in theoretical knowledge. Induction to the trainees' programmes is given over a three-week period before trainees begin

occupational training. Trainees and employers are provided with extensive information, guidance and advice, which provide a sound basis for the work-based programme.

55. The college uses peripatetic assessors to assess the work of most trainees. Assessors visit trainees fortnightly and, in some cases, weekly. Assessments are clearly planned and thorough. Trainees are observed carrying out real activities in the workplace for all the units of their NVQs. Assessments are thorough and rigorous. Assessors give clear and constructive feedback both verbally and in writing. Access to regular assessment has supported trainees to make swift progress in their awards. Many trainees soon learn to set their own assessment plans and targets. Employers support trainees with on-the-job learning and assessment opportunities. Managers and staff in the work placements support trainees in gathering evidence, learning new skills and progressing within their awards. Some day nurseries include after-school clubs, so trainees gain experience in working with children up to the age of eight. Managers, assessors, tutors and trainees work as a team. Trainees' progress is recorded effectively. There has been some poor communication between the college, employers and trainees in the past. The college has resolved these problems and improved arrangements for the trainees who were affected by this. Most work placements lead to the offer of a permanent job for trainees.

56. The weekly training in theoretical knowledge is well planned. Tutors use a range of teaching methods to suit the needs of trainees, including group work, setting trainees individual research and presentations. Trainees are given tasks and projects to complete in the workplace which are then used as evidence in their NVQ portfolios. The topics covered and work set relate directly to the trainees' tasks and responsibilities in the workplace. Trainees have access to computing facilities in these sessions and are encouraged to use their work as evidence towards the key skills awards. Over the past three years, 45 per cent of trainees have achieved NVQs at level 2. The trainees who have begun training towards NVQs at level 3 are making satisfactory progress. The retention rate over the past three years is 58 per cent, but this has improved in the past 12 months.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

Two New Deal clients have completed their early years care and education NVQ level 3 in 12 months and progressed into employment. This shows very good progress.

57. No trainee has completed a key skills award as part of a programme, although some trainees have already achieved key skills through taking a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ). In many cases, assessment and achievement of the key skills awards has been left until the end of the trainees' programmes after they have completed their NVQs at level 3. Over the past year, the college has promoted key skills training at an early stage of programmes and has run workshops and teaching sessions in key skills to support trainees throughout the programmes. Many trainees are unable to attend these sessions as they are already attending an evening class on one evening of the week, and employers are unable to release them for training during the day. The college has begun to negotiate more flexible arrangements with employers to enable trainees to attend. The opportunities to assess key skills alongside occupational skills have been clearly recorded and cross-referenced between NVQ and key skills units.

58. Most employers do not release trainees for off-the-job training during their normal working hours, so trainees have to attend training in their own time. Some employers provide staff training for trainees during weekends and evenings. Several trainees have become overloaded with work through having to fit their training into out-of-work hours and have considered withdrawing from the training scheme.

59. Some trainees had work-based and peripatetic assessors who were unable to support and assess them satisfactorily. It took up to a year for the situation to be resolved and for a new assessor to be allocated by the college. This led to delays for some trainees in achieving units and increased the time taken to complete awards. These trainees have had a poor service. The new assessment arrangements for these trainees are much improved.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 3**

60. The college has an equal opportunities policy, procedures and codes of practice. The equal opportunities committee reviewed and updated the equal opportunities policy in June 2000. There are 16 members of this group. This committee consists of representatives from each curriculum area of the college, including staff responsible for work-based training. The equal opportunities committee is chaired by the college's principal and reports directly to the college's academic board. There are monthly meetings of the group. Items on the agenda cover issues for both work-based trainees and students. The equal opportunities policy is available to staff on the college's computer network and is updated when necessary. An equal opportunities policy statement is provided to trainees as part of their induction paperwork. There is also a trainees' charter which highlights the pledges and responsibilities of the college to the trainees. This charter is also available in different formats, including audio tape and Braille. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups in training. At recruitment, statistics on trainees' gender, age, ethnicity and disability are monitored in accordance with the TEC's requirements. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were regarded by inspectors as no more than standard practice. Inspectors agreed with two of the weaknesses and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ wide range of staff development in equal opportunities
- ◆ comprehensive policy, procedures and codes of practice
- ◆ good marketing materials promote equal opportunities



### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little awareness of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

61. There is a wide range of staff development on equal opportunities, with clearly set objectives for the training. These have included raising staff's awareness of the range of disabilities, increasing their knowledge of the support throughout the college and increasing their awareness of race issues. This development has been available to tutors and front-line administrative staff. Training days have raised awareness of asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, deafness and other physical disabilities. Training on drugs awareness and how to promote inclusive learning is also offered to tutors and support staff.

62. The comprehensive equal opportunities policy, procedures and codes of practice are clear and cover all areas of the college. The codes of practice refer to trainees' recruitment, selection and admissions procedures, learning opportunities, access, guidance and student support. There is a strong commitment to dealing with all cases of discrimination and harassment. Promotional materials are scrutinised to ensure that there are no discriminatory attitudes reflected in language or visual imagery. Materials convey positive images with an appropriate gender mix, and show trainees from minority ethnic groups. They display an equal opportunities statement, which is also displayed in press statements. The college works with local schools to encourage young people to enter work-based training. The equal opportunities statistics for trainees are monitored in the college both within the student body and as a distinct group by the training agency itself. Data are examined at the work-based learning management committee. Recently, equal opportunities targets have been set by the TEC.

63. Trainees receive a copy of the equal opportunities statement at induction and this is briefly discussed. This statement explains that trainees can see the full policy if they wish in the college's library. Most trainees do not seek to read the full policy. Awareness of equal opportunities is not reinforced during the training. Trainees do not remember what they are told about equal opportunities at the induction. Most trainees do not understand how equal opportunities issues affect them or what the equal opportunities procedures mean. This is not the case for care trainees, for whom equal opportunities as a subject is an essential and integral part of their training.

64. Many employers lack knowledge of equal opportunities. The college identified this weakness in the self-assessment report. Many employers do not have an equal opportunities policy and have not been requested to sign up to the policy of the college. Initial monitoring of employers now includes checking the details of the employers' policies. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace by employers and the college and Agency's staff.

65. The college has had many initiatives to promote equal opportunities. This has included partnerships with schools in the form of construction, engineering and textiles initiatives to promote participation by traditionally under-represented groups. Participation by school pupils in these initiatives has not yet had an impact on the representation among trainees. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups and only five trainees with disabilities. There are traditional gender imbalances in most of the occupational areas, which show no signs of improvement.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

66. Trainees receive support from the Agency's work-placement officers, tutors from their curriculum area and the college's client services team. The college holds an open advice evening every month for potential new students and trainees, which is attended by staff from all curriculum areas. Enquiries from these evenings are followed up by the training agency or curriculum area as appropriate. The college has a manager responsible for liaison with schools where the work-based training is promoted. All trainees are allocated a personal tutor from their curriculum area who is responsible for monitoring progress against their qualification aims. From September 2000, all new trainees have undertaken an interactive initial diagnostic assessment using the college's key skills assessment tool. This identifies areas of weakness in the trainees' abilities and the support needed to meet the skill level specified in the training programme they are embarking on. An individual training plan is completed by the work placement officer, the trainee, employer and tutor which records trainees' prior achievements and sets out the trainee's programme. Induction into the college's procedures and the training programme is carried out by the work-placement officer and the personal tutor. Employers provide additional work-based inductions for all employed trainees. During the trainees' programme, they also have support through a quarterly review meeting with the Agency's work-placement officer and through contact with their individual tutors. The self-assessment report identified many strengths which inspectors regarded as no more than standard practice. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths in the self-assessment report and two of the several weaknesses. Inspectors identified one additional strength and weakness and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive support services
- ◆ good support for trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ good advice and guidance

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some poor inductions

- ◆ poor use of individual training plans
- ◆ unsystematic progress reviews

67. Trainees access the comprehensive support services available through the college. The college's client services team provides facilities which are available to all trainees including financial advice and welfare support, a nurse and a youth worker, sports facilities and access to computing facilities. Driving lessons at discounted rates, a travel agency, subsidised car maintenance services and membership of a national organisation for students are also available. The college also provides counselling and advice services, and support with transport costs. Trainees have access to the college's professional careers advisor and the college's additional support team for learning support. All trainees receive a handbook for part-time students which gives details of the support services available. It also relates to the college's charter for trainees, setting out the responsibilities of the college, the trainee, the employer, trainees' parents (for those under 18) and the local community. Trainees have used counselling and support services, and in some cases have been referred on to specialist agencies for further support. Two engineering students have received help with transport costs to their workplaces and the college's nurse has provided ongoing support to trainees with health issues. Hairdressing trainees keep a personal training record on health and safety, which lists their acquired skills and knowledge over a range of health and safety issues. Not all trainees are aware of the range of services available to them, particularly the 10 per cent who do not attend the college's sites for training.

68. Trainees with learning difficulties have obtained additional support through the college's mathematics and English workshops. Trainees with disabilities training in agriculture, engineering and construction receive good individual support from their tutors where necessary. In construction, there is a dedicated member of staff responsible for supporting trainees with learning difficulties. One trainee in motor vehicle maintenance is a mentor for a student with learning difficulties.

69. Trainees receive good advice and guidance. Staff offer trainees additional support and informal counselling for problems which are affecting their work, and seek to provide solutions where possible, such as flexible assessment arrangements, one-to-one support with particular aspects of their programme, and adapting learning and teaching materials to meet trainees' specific needs. Many problems are solved by staff and trainees at an early stage. Staff try to address problems early to prevent trainees from becoming demotivated and leaving their programmes.

70. Some trainees have had poor inductions. Trainees who start at different times from the main group of trainees do not receive a full induction. Trainees in some occupational areas are not aware of the components of their programmes and their inductions are not memorable for them. For many trainees, the induction is not reinforced during their training. Until September 2000, key skills diagnostic testing

was not carried out at induction. As a result, testing has occurred some way into trainees' programmes and the learning and assessment requirements of key skills were not integrated into their individual training plans. In agriculture, manufacturing and accountancy, there has been no initial assessment of occupational skills. One trainee started on too high a level of NVQ and had to move to a lower level.

71. Individual training plans are not well used. They do not identify detailed individual targets for trainees. Individual training plans are not used as working documents to drive the training forward. In agriculture, the individual training plans do not include wordpower and numberpower as qualification aims, although trainees do take these. In some areas, trainees do not have copies of their individual training plans. Progress reviews are unsystematic. They are not used to set clear targets and goals for progression and achievement. The reviews are led by training staff who are not always occupational specialists and cannot respond immediately to technical problems raised by trainees. In some areas, review dates have been missed and employers have not been sufficiently involved. In agriculture, progress reviews are held every four weeks by the course tutor, with no review by any staff from the Agency.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

72. The Agency manages work-based training, which is an integral part of the college. The Agency is situated on the college's main site and also uses the hairdressing academy in the town centre. Until April of this year, the college had two individual contracts with the TEC, one for the Agency and one for the hairdressing academy. There is now a single contract for work-based training. Originally the Agency was formed from three training providers, and the academy was a separate hairdressing training provider. There is a New Deal contract with the Employment Service for the full-time education and training option. The Agency is staffed by a manager and five placement co-ordinators. Three of these work-placement co-ordinators work part time. There are three administrators, including an advanced modern apprentice, and a New Deal co-ordinator. The Agency's manager reports to the director of resources who is a member of the senior management team, who in turn report to the governing body. The college achieved the Investors in People Standard in 1997 and was re-accredited in 1999. The Agency co-ordinates the trainees' initial assessment, produces individual training plans, reviews the progress of trainees and liaises with employers. The college's curriculum tutors provide the training, assessment and internal verification. There are no subcontractors for training. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and five weaknesses. Five of the strengths were regarded by inspectors as no more than standard practice. Inspectors did not agree with two of the strengths and one of the weaknesses. One strength was relevant to the students in the college and not to the trainees. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-established strategic planning of training
- ◆ clear accountability of training staff
- ◆ well-qualified and commercially experienced training staff
- ◆ clearly recorded and promoted staffing procedures

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ unclear management responsibility for trainees
- ◆ inadequate management information to monitor trainees' progress
- ◆ no clear training targets set for staff

73. The college has a well-established strategic planning process which includes aims, objectives and targets for work-based training. The Agency's manager discusses the strategic issues at the weekly managers' meetings and at individual meetings with the director of resources. These plans are shared with the Agency's staff, and progress towards targets are reviewed at regular team meetings. The Agency also has a work-based learning management committee, which meets monthly. The membership of the group includes curriculum leaders. The membership of the group is currently being revised, as attendance has sometimes been poor. The Agency's manager is clearly accountable to the director of resources and to the college's principal and governors. They have frequent meetings and the manager's performance is reviewed annually, with a progress review after six months. The principal and director of educational services are closely involved in the self-assessment process. The Agency's staff are clearly accountable to the manager through team meetings and they are set clear objectives for their work. The team works well and occupies a small office on the college's main campus. The New Deal co-ordinator is based at another campus, but meets with the Agency's manager regularly and is in daily telephone contact.

74. The curriculum staff, who teach the trainees, are well qualified and occupationally experienced. All of the staff have teaching and training qualifications, or are working towards these, as well as occupational qualifications to a high level. Many of the staff have relevant commercial experience, such as through working in engineering firms and small businesses. Some of the part-time staff have gained qualifications through the college. One of the accounting tutors practises as a part-time accountant to a local business. The college strongly promotes training for staff through the annual appraisal system. Some staff are being funded for external training at university. There is an ongoing programme of training towards the assessors, advisers and internal verifiers' qualifications. The Agency's staff are also qualified as assessors and advisers.

75. There is a good range of personnel policies and procedures which provide a sound framework for staff to work to. These are applicable to the Agency's staff and curriculum staff alike. The policies and procedures are available to all staff through the college's intranet. Previously there was a staff handbook but, as procedures were reviewed and updated frequently, the use of the Intranet became more appropriate. There are policies for all aspects of personnel management and training including the appraisal system. Recently, the college restructured staff's roles to appoint programme tutors. The whole process was shared with staff and unions, and they had the opportunity to apply for the new posts. The new posts have been well received by staff. All staff have job descriptions and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

76. The college does not adequately co-ordinate the on- and off-the-job training. The curriculum staff do not take sufficient account of the training given by employers when planning the classroom sessions. There is not enough liaison between the employers and the teaching staff to make the best use of the trainees' whole experience. The college course has a fixed timescale and there is little opportunity for the trainees to progress more quickly than the schedule permits. Similarly, some trainees find it difficult to maintain the pace of the course set by the tutor. The training plans do not show sufficient joint planning between the employers and the college's staff. In some cases, employers are unaware of the details of the college's course or the assessment requirements. There are missed opportunities to involve employers in work-based assessment.

77. There is insufficient understanding between the curriculum staff and the Agency's staff about their responsibilities towards the trainees. It is unclear to some staff, trainees and employers who is supposed to carry out trainees' initial assessment, produce the individual training plans and review trainees' progress. Trainees and employers are confused by the visits from different staff. They are unsure as to who to contact in the event of a problem and about who has the responsibility to resolve problems. In some cases, the work-placement co-ordinators have been informed of problems with training, but they have not resolved these and the problems have continued for several weeks. Work-placement co-ordinators have attended curriculum meetings to discuss trainees' problems, but this is not consistent for all occupational areas.

78. There is no comprehensive management system which records the progress of the trainees. The Agency is unable to identify where each trainee is in the training scheme and what assessment has been completed. Some of the curriculum staff maintain tracking sheets for their individual trainees, but there is no single point in the college which collates this information for use with information from the work-placement co-ordinators to follow the trainees' progress. The college identified this weakness in its self-assessment report. Since self-assessment, the Agency has distributed an individual progress report form to curriculum staff for use with every trainee, which is designed to improve the monitoring of trainees' training. Targets for training are agreed with the TEC and monitored through the quarterly contract reviews. These targets are not systematically shared with curriculum staff, the Agency's staff, employers and trainees. Some curriculum staff are unaware of

the targets and work towards the college's academic schedule instead. In some cases, the training is driven by the academic cycle rather than the trainees' individual needs.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

79. The quality assurance development manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance of all aspects of the college's provision, including work-based training. A quality assurance management committee, reporting to the academic board, monitors quality assurance. This includes monitoring progress towards the achievement of the strategic plan and self-assessment targets, and reviewing internal and external quality assurance reports. A student survey is used to prepare the review of the college-based training, and this contributes to the self-assessment process. Trainees who attend the college are able to provide feedback on their college-based training through informal focus groups held at each of the college's sites. The quality of college-based training is monitored through an annual teaching observation. Assessment is monitored through the internal verification process. Self-assessment is undertaken annually as part of the college's quality cycle. A separate report following the criteria specified in *Raising the Standard* has been produced for three years. Quality assurance arrangements meet the TEC contract and the awarding bodies' requirements. Inspectors agreed that the college's self-assessment process is a strength of its training and that the poor collection of feedback from trainees and employers is a weakness. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified and inspectors awarded a lower grade than that identified in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-established quality assurance procedures for college-based training
- ◆ well-structured self-assessment process
- ◆ good examples of continuous improvement

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient collection of feedback from trainees and employers
- ◆ no specific monitoring of quality of training schemes
- ◆ no auditing of some documents

80. There are well-established procedures for monitoring the quality of all aspects of the college's activities. A quality assurance management committee, which meets monthly receives reports on, and reviews, quality assurance. Each college-based course undertakes a course review, which considers all aspects of the programme from the recruitment of trainees through to their assessment and progression. The tutor completes the review during the academic year in

consultation with course teams. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and an action plan is produced. Surveys of trainees' opinions of college-based training programmes are conducted three times each year. Results of the surveys are used to prepare the course reviews. Summaries are analysed by the quality assurance management committee to establish college-wide trends, and reports are presented to the governors. Currently, only 10 per cent of courses attended by trainees take part in the surveys. Focus groups have been established to gain informal feedback from all students. Trainees and New Deal clients based at one college site have contributed to these. Issues arising out of these meetings are reported to the quality assurance management committee and acted on quickly. Training is observed annually. A sample of sessions is observed in each curriculum area by a team of four staff. Feedback is given to staff, and grades awarded and moderated. A report is produced which contains the grade and identifies good practice. This is compared with the grade given for the previous year. Development needs of individual staff are identified and supported.

81. The self-assessment process is well structured. The college has a culture of self-assessment and the report produced for inspection is the third conducted against the criteria specified in *Raising the Standard*. The process has evolved and is conducted systematically as part of the college's quality assurance procedures. Evidence from other quality assurance procedures, including course reviews, are used to compile the report. Comprehensive guidance for staff has been produced which includes standard self-analysis questions for managers and staff teams. Guidance notes included an analysis of inspection reports of other similar training providers. Each curriculum area providing training completes occupational area reports. A planning group co-ordinates preparation of the draft report, including collating reports on generic aspects. This is validated by the work-based learning management committee, which included representatives from the TEC. Inspectors found that the grading of occupational areas was generally accurate and agreed with five grades given. Two higher grades and one lower grade were awarded. Many of the strengths identified were considered no more than normal practice by inspectors and all generic areas were awarded a lower grade than given in the self-assessment report.

82. Quality assurance procedures have led to improvements in many aspects of work-based training. An internal verification co-ordinator has been appointed to ensure that the college's policy and procedures are being consistently implemented. This work has not yet extended to all programmes, but there have been significant improvements in previous poor practice in some areas. Good practice in internal verification is reported to programme managers and spread through work with course teams. Trainees' feedback has led to improvements such as an increase in work-based assessment in care and changes to hairdressing programmes to improve assessment opportunities. These changes are monitored to evaluate their effectiveness. Feedback from focus groups has led to improvements in resources for horticultural trainees.

83. There is insufficient formal feedback from trainees and employers about the quality of training. Although some trainees may give feedback on college-based



training through student surveys, this is not systematic and does not cover all aspects of their programmes. Trainees have recently completed a standard survey from the TEC based on the criteria in *Raising the Standard*. Feedback has not been analysed for use in the self-assessment process. A similar survey has recently been circulated to employers, but results have not yet been analysed. Advisory committees which include local employers are established in only two occupational areas.

84. Some quality assurance arrangements do not fully monitor work-based training. Target-setting and reviews of performance of individual qualifications do not extend to systematic reviews of performance of training schemes. For example, specific targets are not set for retention and achievement of foundation and advanced modern apprentices. The course-review process does not routinely consider all aspects of training schemes, except where trainees make up most of the course group. Focus groups have not yet been extended to cover work-based training specifically.

85. There is no systematic internal audit of documents to ensure their consistency across all aspects of training. Trainees' personal files are not regularly reviewed to ensure that they are systematically updated. Individual training plans and records of review are not systematically checked for accuracy and relevance. Some old progress-review documents are in use on one of the college's sites. Management files for college-based courses are audited as part of the annual cycle of quality assurance, but this does not specifically identify work-based training.