



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 2000

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY/MARCH 2001

Sandwell College



SUMMARY

Sandwell College offers good training in hair and beauty, and satisfactory training in construction; engineering; retailing and customer service; leisure, sport and travel; hospitality; and health, care and public services. At the time of the first inspection, training in business administration was less than satisfactory. Following reinspection, it is now satisfactory. In construction, hospitality, business administration and retailing and customer service, off-the-job training is particularly good. Progress reviews for trainees on vehicle body repair programmes are conducted well, but less so for trainees following general engineering and light vehicle qualifications. Observations in the workplace of trainees in business administration, care and childcare are frequent and regular. Hairdressing training is good. Trainees have access to a wide variety of training opportunities, both on- and off-the-job. A wide variety of additional qualifications is available in leisure, sport and travel. Trainees benefit from a wide range of support services and the college effectively promotes equality of opportunity. Trainees' achievement and retention rates in many areas are poor. Progress is slow for some trainees in construction and childcare. Insufficient use is made of accreditation of prior learning and experience. Following reinspection, management of training is satisfactory and quality assurance is good. A management reorganisation has given work-based training equal status with other modes of learning in the college. Staff development for both trainers and training development staff is good. There are still insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. The self-assessment process is good and leads to effective action planning to secure continuous improvement in the quality of training. Internal verification is now satisfactory across the college.

As a result of the reinspection of Sandwell College, the original published report text for business administration, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subjected to a full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Business administration	4
Retailing & customer service	3
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	2
Health, care & public services	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Business administration	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ effective development of hairdressing-related key skills
- ◆ good promotion of equality of opportunity by senior management
- ◆ particularly wide range of support services
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ effective self-assessment and action planning processes

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of integration of key skills in business administration and retailing and customer service
- ◆ low priority given to equality of opportunity in workplaces
- ◆ lack of effective accreditation of prior learning and experience
- ◆ poor links between on- and off-the-job training

INTRODUCTION

1. Sandwell College is a large further education institution with four campuses, on each based in Smethwick, West Bromwich, Oldbury and Wednesbury. The college recruits students from its immediate locality, from the West Midlands region and elsewhere throughout the United Kingdom, as well as from overseas. In addition to its four main campuses, the college also operates in over 30 community venues throughout Sandwell. The Oldbury campus has been developed as a business centre and is used primarily for full-cost commercial training and conferencing for business and industry. Five years ago, the college launched a Saturday and Sunday college. The college's links with several universities enable local people to enter higher education. Programmes offered range from prevocational to postgraduate level and include national vocational qualifications (NVQs), general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), higher national certificates/diplomas (HNCs/Ds), general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs), general certificates of education (GCEs) at A level and a large range of foundation and professional qualifications.

2. The college is a founder member of a regional partnership for learning. The chair of the board of governors and the principal are both members of a civic partnership. This group, which includes executives of the borough council, the health authority, the police, employer forums and the Employment Service, is developing a strategy for the regeneration of Sandwell and act as the umbrella group for all partnership activities within the borough. The college has a contract with Sandwell Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and for other work-based training for young people in 11 occupational areas, including foundation for work. The college is also an active participant in a consortium of local colleges, which is responsible for the development and provision of the New Deal in the region. Sandwell College has a contract with the consortium for the full-time education and training option of the New Deal within the Sandwell area. The college's curriculum activities are divided into a number of programme areas. The TEC and the New Deal contracts come under the workforce development programme area, the head of which reports directly to the assistant principal. This gives work-based training equal status with all other college activities.

3. The Sandwell economy is heavily dependent on manufacturing which, while on the decline, still represents 37 per cent of jobs in the borough, compared with 18 per cent nationally. Between 2000 and 2005, employment in Sandwell is forecast to grow by 1.5 per cent against a national projection of 10 per cent. Much employment in the area is on a small scale, with local companies with fewer than 20 employees representing over 70 per cent of the companies in Sandwell. The local unemployment rate is 6.0 per cent compared with the national average of 3.5 per cent. The proportion of unemployed people who are aged between 18 and 24 is 25.3 per cent. This is similar to the average of 24.9 per cent for England. The unemployment rate among men is over twice that among women. The level of

unemployment is significantly higher among minority ethnic groups. These groups represent 14.7 per cent of the working age population. The average for England is 6.2 per cent. Long-term unemployment is also higher than the national average. In 1999, 27.6 per cent of the local population had been unemployed for over one year and 44.7 per cent had been unemployed for over two years. In January 2001, unemployment in Sandwell was 6 per cent compared with the national average of 3.5 per cent.

4. Sandwell has seven schools with sixth forms and a sixth-form college. There are 10 other colleges within a 10-mile radius of West Bromwich, which lies at the centre of Sandwell. In Sandwell, 54 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds are in full-time education, 14 per cent are in government-funded training and 7 per cent are in other part-time education. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Sandwell was 31.7 per cent, compared with the average for England of 49.2 per cent.

Trainee numbers by programme and occupational area at the first inspection

	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other	New deal	TOTAL
Construction	3	14	71	0	88
Engineering	48	33	63	3	147
Business administration	20	30	2	2	54
Retailing & customer service	9	13	4	3	29
Leisure, sport & travel	0	21	0	2	23
Hospitality	0	11	1	0	12
Hair & beauty	1	37	3	0	41
Health, care & public services	2	43	0	6	51
Total	83	202	144	16	445

Trainee numbers by programme and occupational area at the reinspection

	Advanced modern apprentices	Foundation modern apprentices	Other	New deal	TOTAL
Construction	3	53	35	2	93
Engineering	39	73	31	6	149
Manufacturing	0	0	6	0	6
Business administration	14	28	5	4	51
Retailing & customer service	3	8	8	0	19
Leisure, sport & travel	0	10	0	1	11
Hospitality	2	5	0	0	7
Hair & beauty	3	32	0	1	36
Health, care & public services	4	10	21	5	40
Media, arts & design	2	0	6	0	8
Foundation for work	0	0	26	2	28
Total	70	219	138	21	448

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Sandwell college produced its first self-assessment report in April 1999 and an update in November 1999. The government schemes manager and the college-wide quality assurance team completed the self-assessment report with involvement from occupational specialists and staff from the training division. Staff involved in the process received training in self-assessment.

6. The college produced its latest self-assessment report for reinspection in February 2001, together with an update of its post-inspection action plan. There is a single self-assessment report covering all aspects of the college's work for all funding agencies. In October 2000, each department of the college produced a self-assessment report on its activities, including an action plan and a grade on the quality of its work. The reports were submitted to the college's quality and performance unit, which reviewed each report, co-ordinated the action plans and compiled the college's overall self-assessment report.

7. The first inspection was carried out jointly with a Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection, and inspectors from both teams shared evidence and findings. Ten inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) spent a total of 38 days at Sandwell College in February 2000. They interviewed 129 trainees and 12 New Deal clients. Twenty-six interviews were conducted with college training staff and 35 with college management staff. Inspectors visited 70 workplaces and four college campuses. Twenty interviews were conducted with workplace training staff and 47 with workplace management staff. Eighty-four trainees' files, 90 training plans and 61 trainees' portfolios were reviewed. Other documents reviewed included contracts with the TEC, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance and operating manuals, minutes of meetings, staff development plans, schemes of work, marketing materials and monitoring data. Inspectors observed 15 training sessions, four assessments and one review. The grades awarded to the training sessions are given in the first table below.

8. At the reinspection, a team of three inspectors from the TSC spent a total of 12 days at the college in February and March 2001. They interviewed 27 trainees and a New Deal client. Inspectors also interviewed 35 managers, trainers, assessors and training and development officers from the college. They visited 19 employers and work-placement providers and interviewed 19 workplace supervisors. Inspectors examined trainees' files and portfolios of evidence, records of assessments, internal verification and external verification, minutes of meetings, health and safety records, contracts, quality assurance and operating manuals, staff development plans and other management records. Inspectors observed two training sessions and three assessments in the workplace. The grades awarded for the training sessions are given in the second table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			1			1
Engineering	1	2				3
Business administration		1	1			2
Retailing & customer service		1	2			3
Leisure, sport & travel			1			1
Hospitality		1				1
Hair & beauty		1	2			3
Health, care & public services			1			1
Total	1	6	8	0	0	15

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration			2			2
Total	0	0	2	0	0	2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

9. There are 88 trainees in construction. Seventy-one are on other training programmes, three are modern apprentices and 14 are national trainees. All except nine of the trainees are employed. Construction has enrolled eight students, one in plastering, one in painting and decorating and six in carpentry, who, after diagnostic assessment and in negotiation with the careers office, have been endorsed and their learning goal is an NVQ at level 1. One trainee in building, three in electrical, and one in carpentry have been assessed as requiring significant additional support to enable them to achieve an NVQ at level 2. The trainees attend college on either a full-time or on a day-release basis for NVQs at level 2, and on a day-release basis for level 3. All trainees have some time on a work placement or on work experience depending on contractual arrangements. Occupations include carpentry and joinery, brickwork, plastering, painting and decorating and electrical installation. Those trainees who are not employed are funded by either the college or the TEC. All off-the-job training and assessment are carried out by qualified assessors at the college for all the crafts, although some workplace recording and assessment are now being developed. Training and development officers visit trainees at the workplace at three-monthly intervals to carry out progress reviews. Achievement of NVQs in construction training over

the previous three years is poor. The lead industry body for electrical installation has reintroduced the NVQ at level 2, after suspending the award since May 1999. Trainees who started the programme in 1999 were obliged to work towards the electrical/electronics NVQ at level 2. Over the previous two years no NVQs have been achieved in electrical installation, and no trainees have successfully completed their training plans. Retention rates over the previous three years have been showing a gradual improvement. In 1996-97 retention was 20 per cent, in 1997-98 it was 34 per cent, and in 1998-99 it was 50 per cent. Over the previous three years, 11 trainees have completed their training plans and 22 trainees achieved NVQs. The self-assessment report understated the weaknesses in this area, and most of the strengths were no more than normal practice or contractual obligations. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and well-recorded off-the-job training
- ◆ good review process and documents
- ◆ good placements with supportive employers
- ◆ good off-the-job assessment practice in brickwork

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little work-based assessment
- ◆ poorly organised portfolios

POOR PRACTICE

One placement is unsatisfactory, as it provides an insufficient range of work. One trainee has spent over three years on an NVQ at level 2 and has not yet achieved the qualification.

10. All trainees are assessed on entry for basic skills, and the results from this are used to decide upon the type of programme a trainee follows, and to determine whether additional support is necessary. Trainees with learning difficulties attend additional classes to develop their basic skills. This training is carried out effectively and is valued by trainees. Trainees follow a good induction programme at the start of their course which effectively informs them about the learning programme, describes their rights and responsibilities and emphasises health and safety issues. Induction includes residential programmes where outdoor activities provide opportunities for trainees to collect evidence towards their key skills and to develop confidence and motivation.

11. Off-the-job training is effectively planned, standards are specified and learning opportunities are used effectively. Teaching techniques are adapted to suit the abilities and learning styles of trainees. Trainees benefit from an effective tutorial process which involves target setting and review, and key skills are effectively linked to each NVQ. On-the-job training offers a variety of training opportunities which are, in most cases, very good and a wide range of work placements are used. For example, a carpentry and joinery trainee, who is with a chartered building company, is given good opportunities for manufacturing joinery

components, site carpentry and shop fitting. Most placements are with smaller companies, employing less than 10 people, and trainees are doing electrical installation work, general building extension and maintenance work, office and shop furniture and joinery manufacturing. Trainees are involved in work which is relevant to their NVQ programmes.

12. Assessment is carried out at the college by accredited assessors and the quality varies from satisfactory to good across all programmes. The best example of assessment practice is in the brickwork section where it is effectively planned, systematically carried out and records are comprehensive and well maintained. Trainees are clear about standards to be achieved and know how they are progressing. Some are given opportunities to assess themselves. This is an effective assessment system, and the overall assessment plan is clearly displayed in the workshop.

13. Off-the-job resources are good. They include a dedicated resource centre with 17 new computers and industry-associated software, good clean accommodation and workshops with well-maintained equipment and hand tools.

14. Efforts are being made to assess trainees in the workplace, but this practice is still being developed. Training development officers visit trainees at work to carry out periodic reviews and work enthusiastically to ensure that trainees' needs are met. Trainees' progress is discussed, pastoral issues dealt with and on most occasions a company representative is involved. External verification reports show that all courses comply with awarding bodies' requirements and all action points raised are responded to quickly and satisfactorily.

15. Health and safety issues are dealt with effectively and trainees are aware of the primary issues. Training development officers who are responsible for setting up and monitoring placements have appropriate health and safety qualifications. Placements comply with health and safety requirements and employers demonstrate a high awareness of them.

16. Trainees' portfolios are sometimes poorly organised. They contain an insufficient depth and breadth of evidence and they are poorly cross-referenced.

Engineering

Grade 3

17. There are 147 trainees in total, comprising 48 modern apprentices, 33 national trainees, 63 trainees on other work-based programmes and three New Deal clients. There are 135 trainees following NVQs in automotive engineering programmes in either light vehicle repair or vehicle body repair. Twelve trainees are on general engineering programmes. Trainees on automotive engineering programmes are placed in companies ranging from large dealerships to small partnerships, in service and repair garages dealing with both light and commercial vehicles. These trainees attend off-the-job training at the college on either a day-release basis or on

short block-release sessions. For general engineering, off-the-job training is provided by the college on a twice-weekly basis. All trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 as well as an engineering foundation qualification in the first year of training. On completion of this foundation training, trainees in year two and beyond spend one day each week in college following an appropriate course of further education. Modern apprentices are required to complete two additional units before being registered for the level 3 qualification and a craft qualification. The college acknowledges that achievement and retention rates are unsatisfactory, and has made improvements over the past year. Staff in each programme area have drawn up detailed action plans to address these problems. These actions include participation by all staff in development sessions on retention strategies, and a move to get all staff to take responsibility for retention. The achievement rate for automotive engineering trainees who complete the course is good at over 80 per cent on each programme and averaging over 90 per cent across the occupational area. Trainee numbers in this area are low and no modern apprentices have come to the end of their programme. Other engineering training programmes have a good achievement level for those trainees who complete at least one year of their programme. Inspectors considered some of the strengths in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice and identified several additional weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of off-the-job facilities
- ◆ good teaching practice
- ◆ well-qualified and enthusiastic staff
- ◆ high-quality of placements for automotive engineering trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective reviews in general engineering and light vehicle
- ◆ ineffective induction
- ◆ poor understanding by trainees of NVQ and key skills in general engineering
- ◆ no initial assessment of trainees in general engineering

18. Off-the-job resources for automotive engineering programmes are good. There is a range of current vehicle models for trainees to work on. Workshops are equipped to industry standard and continual investment is made to maintain this standard. General engineering workshops have a comprehensive range of modern high-technology equipment. Group and one-to-one teaching in both automotive and general engineering is of a good standard. A variety of methods are used and the learning is effectively related to workplace practice. Trainees respond to this by working well and on their own initiative.

19. Staff are well trained both occupationally and in terms of training skills. The college has an excellent staff development system. Staff are able to keep their occupational skills and knowledge up to date by attending a range of manufacturers' courses and by spending time on work experience with local employers.

20. Most placements have a high quality of facilities and modern equipment which offer good learning opportunities. Some placements in automotive engineering are authorised to carry out work to manufacturers' warranty standard and this enables trainees to work to the highest industry standards. Staff at placement providers provide good training and are supportive of their trainees. Vehicle body trainees have regular reviews at which progression targets are agreed on. These cover both on- and off-the-job training. They are reviewed at each meeting and new targets are set. Trainees are aware of the targets and are able to monitor their own progress.

21. Induction is ineffective. Trainees undergo an induction programme at the college when they start the programme. However, most of the programme covers practical occupational skills with one day devoted to administration and other matters. Health and safety, equal opportunities, NVQs, course frameworks, key skills, assessment and college facilities are covered in the college diary which trainees are given. Trainees are expected to use this as their primary source of information and additional information is cursory. Trainees have a poor level of retention of information from the induction programme. In general engineering, trainees have a poor understanding of the NVQs, key skills and modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks to which they are working. This prevents them effectively identifying opportunities for evidence gathering.

22. Reviews of light vehicle and general engineering trainees are superficial and are not used to set targets. Their general progress is discussed and the process is well recorded, but depth and detail about trainees' progress towards their NVQ is lacking. Trainees are unable to measure their progress. There is no initial assessment for general engineering trainees.

23. New Deal trainees are given job-search training while they are waiting for a work placement. However, once they start on work experience, they are unaware of the availability of continued job-search assistance at the college.

24. Assessment is satisfactory. Work carried out by trainees is recorded on job cards devised by the college which are authenticated by staff at the placement. These are presented as evidence towards the qualification. The placement staff who authenticate the job cards occasionally lack understanding of the requirements of NVQs and the occupational standards. College assessors validate this evidence by questioning trainees and witnesses. College staff also visit the trainees in the workplace to carry out assessments.

25. Automotive trainees' portfolios are well organised and contain a great deal of work-based evidence, as well as college-generated work. They also contain key

skills evidence which is almost exclusively college work. In general engineering, portfolios of work-based evidence are poor in comparison.

Business administration

Grade 3

26. Sandwell College offers modern apprenticeships and other training programmes in administration and accounting at levels 2 and 3. Advanced modern apprentices in accounting and those on other work-based training for young people have the opportunity to progress to an NVQ at level 4. The college also offers training in administration and accounting to New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. At the first inspection, there were 52 trainees and two New Deal clients. There are now 47 trainees and four New Deal clients. The numbers on each programme for the first inspection and the reinspection are shown in the tables below. All modern apprentices and one foundation modern apprentice are employed. All other trainees and New Deal clients have work placements. Employers and work placement providers include a wide variety of companies in the local area, including small accountancy firms, small and medium sized enterprises and local government departments.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ unsatisfactory internal verification practices
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ slow progress by some trainees in administration
- ◆ off-the-job training for business administration not individualised
- ◆ overuse of simulated work for business administration trainees

27. Since the first inspection, internal verification arrangements have been revised and additional monitoring and control arrangements have been established through the college's lead internal verifiers. Work-based assessment has been introduced in administration and the amount of simulated work significantly reduced. There is no work-based assessment in accounting or for key skills. Off-the-job training for administration trainees has been revised and trainees are making satisfactory progress. The self-assessment report concentrated on the developments which have taken place in the college since the first inspection. The report identified the need to improve retention and achievement rates and key skills. The report included the amount of work-based assessment in administration as a strength. The self-assessment report used written guidelines from the accounting awarding body as evidence for the college not needing to introduce workplace assessments. The inspectors agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

28. Trainees work on a variety of tasks closely related to their qualifications. A training and development officer visits trainees in the workplace at least every 13 weeks to conduct a progress review. Assessors visit administration trainees in the workplace every three to four weeks. In administration, there are five qualified assessors and three qualified internal verifiers. Internal verification systems have been introduced, to sample assessors' work on a regular basis, and there are regular meetings between assessors and internal verifiers in administration to

address issues relating to NVQ standards. Assessment of accounting trainees is by examination and work-based assignments. There are five qualified assessors in accounting and four qualified internal verifiers.

29. Trainees attend the college during the academic year for day-release sessions as part of their training. In their first year, trainees can choose to attend for one or two days a week. In their second year, it is one day a week. Trainees attend the college for key skills sessions, NVQ sessions and additional computing and word-processing classes. There are four tutors, three of whom specialise in key skills. Trainees who are not employed have a two-week induction to introduce them to the opportunities for employment in the business sector. It includes health and safety, equal opportunities and preparation for interview. Employed trainees have a one-day induction in the college and a further induction with a training and development officer in the workplace. Trainees' individual training plans take account of existing knowledge and skills with credit being given for prior achievements. One member of staff in administration and four members of staff in accounting are qualified in the accreditation of prior learning or achievement. In accounting, one trainee has completed an advanced modern apprenticeship and, since April 1997, 14 trainees have achieved an NVQ at level 2, 23 at level 3 and 15 at level 4. In administration since April 1997, 39 trainees have achieved an NVQ at level 2 and 4 at level 3. No administration trainees have achieved the key skills units appropriate to their apprenticeship. Of those trainees who have left other work-based training programmes in the past four years, 26 per cent have completed their training plan.

Number of trainees on each programme at the first inspection

		Administration	Accounting	Total
Modern apprenticeship		2	18	20
National traineeship		30	-	30
Other work-based training for young people at level	2	-	-	0
	3	2	-	2
	4	-	-	0
New Deal at level	2	-	1	1
	3	-	-	0
	4	-	1	1
Total		34	20	54

Number of trainees on each programme at the reinspection

		Administration	Accounting	Total
Modern apprenticeship		4	10	14
National traineeship		28	-	28
Other work-based training for young people at level	2	1	1	2
	3	-	2	2
	4	-	1	1
New Deal at level	2	2	1	3
	3	-	1	1
	4	-	-	0
Total		35	16	51

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent work-based assessment in administration
- ◆ good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention rates for trainees in administration
- ◆ little use of work-based evidence in key skills

GOOD PRACTICE

The college holds the franchise for an international 'virtual' business. The college company trades with international partners. All trainees at the college can use this facility, and when they work in it they become employees. It is run as a business and all employees get a chance to work in different departments. They communicate with their international counterparts daily via e-mail, fax and telephone and there is an international trainee exchange scheme in operation.

30. Trainees in administration are assessed in the workplace every three to four weeks. Assessors involve the trainees in planning these assessments. They are responsive to each trainee's individual needs and capabilities. Assessors discuss with trainees what is to be achieved by the next visit and agree on an action plan. They use a good range of assessment methods, including direct observation of trainees in the workplace. Training and development officers use the action plans to set short-term achievement targets for trainees. Trainees are monitored against these targets. Accounting trainees produce good, authenticated workplace evidence towards their NVQ. Trainees working towards an NVQ at level 4 carry out a work-based management project. Each trainee has a project tailored to his or her own job. Off-the-job training at the college is good. It is well structured with clear schemes of work and lesson plans. Attendance is good and trainees value the work they undertake at college. The facilities at the college provide trainees with a good training environment. Trainees have access to computer equipment which meets industry standards.

31. In administration, 54 per cent of trainees starting a foundation modern apprenticeship, and 60 per cent of those starting an advanced modern

apprenticeship have left the college before completing their training. No administration trainees have completed an advanced or foundation modern apprenticeship. Trainees are planned to be in training for two years. There is no pattern to the length of time trainees remain on their programme before they leave. For advanced modern apprentices in accounting, 50 per cent of trainees leave before completing their training. One trainee has left having completed the framework.

32. No assessment of key skills is undertaken in the workplace. Scheduled key skills training sessions are separate from those dealing with the trainees' NVQs. There is limited use of work-based evidence in the assignment work that is undertaken in the college. Assessors are not taking the opportunity to assess key skills in the workplace and no attempt is made to identify opportunities for assessment of key skills in the work environment. While trainees understand that key skills form part of their programme, they do not understand how they can be integrated with their NVQ. Most employers and work-placement providers have little knowledge of key skills and the part they play in the training programme.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

33. Sandwell College has 29 trainees working towards NVQs at level 1, 2 or 3 in retailing, customer service, distributive operations or warehousing. Trainees are on modern apprenticeships, national traineeships, skills development (other youth training) or New Deal programmes, as detailed in the table below. Many of the trainees are employed at the start of their programme, and are recruited by their employer. These trainees then contact Sandwell College to start their programme. Trainees not already employed are recruited onto the programme by the programme leader. All trainees are interviewed by the programme leader or one of the tutors prior to joining their programme. For those trainees not in employment, work placements are organised by either the tutor or the training and development officer at Sandwell College. Trainees attend work placements for two days of the week, and college for the remaining three days. Trainees work for a wide range of organisations including small shops, chain stores, offices, warehouses and large organisations within the Sandwell, Walsall and Birmingham areas. Employers in the workplace provide formal and informal training. Many trainees attend day-release off-the-job training at Sandwell College, covering the key skills and background knowledge and understanding for retailing and customer service. All assessment is carried out at work by one of the qualified and industrially experienced college assessors. A training and development officer from the college visits trainees in the workplace once every three months to conduct a review and check the trainee's progress. Achievement on all retailing and customer service programmes is poor. Achievement of individual training plans for trainees on other youth training programmes is low at 31 per cent for 1997-98 and 12 per cent for 1998-99. Many trainees leave programmes early: 66 per cent in 1997-98 and 70 per cent in 1998-99. The current early leaver rate for 1999-2000 is 26 per cent. Self-assessment identified many strengths and few weaknesses. Inspectors regarded some of these strengths as no more than normal practice and others were

found to be generic across all occupational areas. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

This table shows trainee numbers by programme and occupational area

	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other	New deal	TOTAL
	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	
Retailing	3	11		1	15
Customer service	6			2	8
Warehousing		2			2
Distributive operations			4		4
Total	9	13	4	3	29

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-organised and individually tailored off-the-job training
- ◆ high-quality portfolios
- ◆ good internal verification
- ◆ good on- and off-the-job resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of integration of key skills
- ◆ no analysis of feedback from trainees or employers
- ◆ poor induction

34. Off-the-job training takes place at college on several days of the week, including a Sunday and one evening. All trainees have access to this training, and many trainees attend college on a day-release basis. Some of the employed trainees are not granted time off from work by their employers to attend the off-the-job training, and a few of these trainees attend the Sunday training session. Off-the-job training covers three of the key skills (information technology, application of number and communication) and knowledge and understanding sessions on retailing. Attendance at off-the-job training sessions is excellent. The sessions include a variety of learning techniques and activities which are adopted to suit the different ability levels of trainees in the group. Trainers have both industrial experience and teaching qualifications. Trainees take an active part in the sessions and their experiences from work are utilised by the trainers. There are good resources and trainees have access to information technology and the internet.

35. Trainees are enthusiastic about all aspects of their training programme. They enjoy the training sessions, especially the skills needed for work. They take an active part in collecting evidence for their portfolios. These are of a very high quality and trainees take pride in the work contained in them. Observations of trainees take place on a regular basis, often as frequently as every two weeks. These observations are supplemented by case studies, product evidence from the workplace, spare time activities and workbooks. Case studies include exploration of how a trainee has dealt with a customer's complaint, and an exercise to compare store displays in London with those in trainees' workplaces. Trainees write good summaries and evidence is well referenced in their portfolios.

36. The New Deal clients are fully integrated into the retailing and customer service programmes. Two of the New Deal clients are following the full-time education and training option, while one client is on the employment option. The New Deal clients attend college for five days a week, while a placement is being identified for them. They make good use of the job-search training and the facilities provided by central curriculum services, the college department responsible for trainee support and key skills.

37. Internal verification is carried out by a qualified member of the team who has retailing experience. The process is well planned and recorded in detail, and there is a sampling strategy that includes both assessors and a range of trainees and qualifications. Portfolios are reviewed as part of this process and assessors' observations are also internally verified. External verifiers' reports for February and November 1999 both have action points relating to internal verification. These have been dealt with and correct procedures have been implemented.

38. Retailing and customer service trainees experience different induction programmes depending on the time of year they join the programme and whether or not they are employed. Induction for those trainees who are not employed and who join in September is carried out over two weeks and includes college orientation, NVQs and an introduction to equal opportunities and health and safety policies. Trainees who join the programme at any other time of the year have an induction which ranges from one day to one week. Some trainees cannot remember having an induction to their programme. Those trainees in employment have a short induction given by their assessor, which covers the NVQ work. This induction takes place in the workplace and lasts from one to three hours. All trainees have a very poor recollection of what is covered during induction or how it has helped them to start their programme. Employed trainees receive a work-based induction, which is carried out by their supervisor. Trainees have a key skills initial assessment as part of this induction, which is used to ascertain the level of support they will need for their key skills work.

39. No trainees have yet achieved their qualifications, on either the modern apprenticeship or national traineeship programmes, both programmes began in September 1998 and these programmes usually take three years and two years respectively to complete. The key skills part of the framework has not been fully implemented and important aspects, including improving one's own learning and

performance and working with others, are not assessed. Trainees are unaware of the need to cover these key skills in their programme. Key skills are not integrated into the programmes and there is no work-based assessment or verification of trainees' key skills. Key skills are taught and assessed at college through assignments and activities. Trainees who do not attend the off-the-job training sessions have no opportunity to achieve their key skills.

40. Trainees' reviews are carried out by the training development officer on a 13-week basis. Trainees' general progress and their experience at work are discussed as part of the review. Targets set by the training and development officer are related to NVQs or to key skills completion. Feedback from trainees and employers is collected informally through the review process. There is no systematic way of communicating this feedback to the retail/customer service section leader and assessors. Trainees were surveyed in 1998-99 to establish their views on their programme and the support offered, but these findings have not yet been analysed. Interviews held with trainees leaving the programme are occasionally carried out, but the records are held on trainees' files and are not analysed.

41. Resources at work are generally very good and help trainees to progress towards their NVQ. Resources at the college are also good. One of the classrooms used for the retailing NVQ has examples of work, photographs, quotations and posters on the walls. This room also has a service counter to allow for role-play activity. Another classroom used is in the catering section, and is adequate for the group. Both classrooms have overhead projectors and white boards. Furniture is very good and the layout encourages discussion and a relaxed atmosphere.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 3

42. There are 23 trainees in this occupational area, of whom 21 are national trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 in sport and recreation and two are New Deal clients. None of the national trainees are employed. New Deal clients are following the full-time education and training option. Trainees are usually recruited straight from school or via the careers service. All trainees receive off-the-job training in the college for two days each week in the first year of their programme and one day each week in the second year. Placements are provided in local authority sports centres, swimming pools and private fitness centres. Additional qualifications are offered to trainees during their college training sessions. These include first aid, the community sports leader award, life saving qualifications and some coaching awards. A training and development officer reviews all trainees in the workplace every 12 weeks. In addition, college tutors visit the workplace to carry out NVQ assessments. In sport and leisure, achievement rates appear to be high although this is masked by the poor retention rate. Most trainees who complete the programme achieve an NVQ. However, statistics for the past three years show a high proportion of early leavers: 92 per cent in 1996 and 47 per cent in 1997. In 1998, 12 trainees converted to national traineeship programmes. Many leave early to go into full-time employment.

Achievement in 1996 was 100 per cent but only two trainees completed the programme. In 1997, nine trainees out of 19 completed the programme. In 1998, there were no NVQs achieved because all trainees were transferred on to the new national traineeship programme. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report. For example, inspectors agreed that the range of additional studies is good. Some strengths were found to be no more than normal practice, but additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of additional and industry-specific qualifications offered
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good induction

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor NVQ target-setting and monitoring
- ◆ unstructured on-the-job training
- ◆ incomplete monitoring documents

GOOD PRACTICE

A group of five trainees, led by a college tutor, are involved in a national project run by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Youth Sports Trust. Their brief was to submit a proposal to run a sports festival in the community and also complete 100 hours voluntary work with a sporting focus. A multi-sport event for 13 schools was proposed, and the trainees were selected to join one of three finalist groups. They are now invited to a four-day residential programme at Loughborough University. The sports event will run in May 2000 and the first prize is a trip to the Olympic games in Sydney, Australia.

43. An extensive induction programme is carried out in college in September and lasts for up to four weeks. During the induction, college tutors provide trainees with information about the programme structure and organisation. A detailed handbook for trainees is also provided which contains information on the college, trainees' responsibilities and entitlements, equal opportunities and health and safety policies. Every trainee takes an initial assessment in key skills during induction which is used to establish any additional learning needs they may have. Such trainees are referred to specialist staff within the college, for extra support and guidance.

44. Off-the-job training is good and is supplemented by a wide range of additional recreational activities on campus, including competitive team sports and tennis ballboy/girl training. However, the NVQ is not started until half-way through the first year, and trainees miss useful opportunities for assessment and evidence-gathering. New trainees receive specific key skills training during their college sessions and use a range of assignments written especially for sport and recreation trainees.

45. There is a very wide range of additional qualifications offered, which are appropriate to employment in the sport and leisure industry. The college pays for trainees to undertake these qualifications and achievement rates are high. A sports leadership qualification involves trainees in planning and carrying out coaching

sessions for children in a local primary school. The trainees, children and school staff all benefit from this activity and it has become well established in the school timetable.

46. None of the trainees are employed but they work in good-quality placements in fitness suites, leisure centres and swimming pools. Trainees change placements every six months to ensure that the range of requirements for the NVQ are met. This rotation also gives the trainees good experience of different leisure establishments and methods of working. Trainees are involved in the choice of a new placement and can see the benefits of these changes.

47. Trainees receive little formal training at work. Although some training does take place, it is unplanned, and only occurs as new tasks arise. One employer provides a company training manual, which is produced by a chain of private fitness centres but is not linked to the trainee's individual training plan. Employers make little reference to the NVQ requirements in the workplace unless the trainee specifically requests some assistance. Employers are unclear about their role and responsibilities in the training programme. They are not involved in monitoring trainees' progress and are often unaware of what training is required for trainees. The overall training programme lacks coherence and involvement by employers, particularly in the planning stages.

48. All assessment is carried out in the workplace by occupationally qualified college tutors. They visit trainees every two weeks to carry out direct observations and to plan assessment opportunities. On-the-job resources are generally satisfactory, but can vary depending on the placement. The rotation of placements every six months helps to redress any imbalances that may occur. Off-the-job training in college takes place in an adequate college building. Nearby local authority sports centres are also used for practical training sessions.

49. A training and development officer regularly reviews trainees at work. The officer for sport and recreation is newly appointed and is not vocationally qualified or familiar with the NVQ structure. The advice and guidance given to trainees on NVQs is insufficient and rigorous progress targets are not set. Links between on- and off-the-job training are weak. Reviews are carried out without employers being present and a record is kept in the training action plan. Trainees agree on the review findings and sign the record, retaining a copy for their files. Employers are usually informed of the outcome of the review and also sign the record. The quality of recording has recently improved, following the appointment of a new training and development officer, but the content remains general and superficial. The individual learning plans are kept in college and are not used as working documents. Many sections are incomplete or are not updated as the trainee makes progress. Information in learning plans addresses mainly welfare issues. Useful information is not always transferred from the training action plan to the training plan to give a complete and up-to-date record of trainees' targets and progress.

50. College tutors are responsible for workplace assessment but do not set challenging targets for trainees. They have limited time available and do not

provide opportunities for assessment which match the shift pattern of the trainee. Documents often show a vague target date for completion and this is not regularly adjusted as trainees progress. Trainees are now being taught key skills through college-based assignments.

51. External verifiers' reports are generally satisfactory. One report required action to be taken on the number of internal verifiers and another commented on the use of witness testimonies. The college is addressing these action points. Trainees' portfolios are satisfactory but contain mainly witness testimonies and completed theory questionnaires.

Hospitality

Grade 3

52. There are 12 trainees on hospitality programmes, three of whom are taking hotel reception qualifications and nine are taking food preparation qualifications. All but one are national trainees, and these eleven trainees started in the last year on other training programmes and were subsequently transferred to national traineeships. Food preparation trainees started working towards NVQs at level 1 and are now registered on NVQs at level 2. Many trainees start on the programme during the summer when a special induction is arranged. Trainees are placed in a wide range of work placements, which they attend in the same way as employees. Three trainees are employed and a third of the other workplace providers are considering offering employment to their trainees. All trainees attend college for off-the-job training on one day each week during college terms. Trainees are visited in the workplace for progress reviews, which are conducted by their training development officer at least every 13 weeks. In catering, there are three trainees who have been assessed as requiring significant additional support to achieve an NVQ at level 2. In hospitality, the last group of catering trainees to complete a two-year programme started in 1997. Of 10 trainees, six left the programme within six months and only one achieved a level 2 NVQ by the end of two years. Retention in hospitality is improving. In 1996, it was 37 per cent, in 1997, it was 20 per cent and in 1998, the trainees converted to national traineeships and retention is now 100 per cent. In 1998, hotel reception trainees transferred to national traineeships and the retention rate is 66 per cent. In 1998, 50 per cent of trainees achieved NVQs and 80 per cent of trainees who started remained on the programme.

53. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice, but inspectors identified additional strengths. They agreed with all of the weaknesses identified and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction
- ◆ flexible off-the-job training
- ◆ good achievements by trainees with learning difficulties

- ◆ good key skills development
- ◆ regular and effective tutors' reviews

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little work-based assessment for most trainees
- ◆ poorly co-ordinated planning of training for most trainees
- ◆ unclear targets set by training development officers

54. Eighty-five per cent of hospitality trainees start at the beginning of the academic year and receive a comprehensive two-week induction programme. Trainees remember and understand the induction reasonably well. Induction sessions are available at a later date for those starting the programme after the start of the academic year. During induction, trainees take the basic food hygiene certificate and are given a thorough induction into the industry and the qualifications, together with information on health and safety, equality of opportunity, and the range of support services available. Most trainees also attend a summer school programme funded by the college prior to starting their TEC-funded programme.

55. Trainees attending college for off-the-job training in food production join classes of full-time catering students and are able to attend on the day of the week that is most suitable for them and their work supervisor. Trainees requiring more support either in their vocational training or in key skills work are able to attend on additional days, as required. Theory is effectively taught in groups or in one-to-one sessions linked to the individual needs of each trainee. Trainees with additional learning support needs are given the time and support needed to enable them to achieve at level 1 and to progress to and achieve at higher levels. Appropriate and supportive work placements are found for these trainees to prepare them for permanent employment.

56. Key skills development is effective. All trainees have an initial assessment of their key skills. Some trainees are reluctant to accept the need for any work that is not overtly and exclusively part of their vocational studies, and tutors in hospitality work with key skills tutors to develop a number of alternative strategies to address this problem. Key skills and basic skills are taught and assessed systematically and are integrated with the learning programme.

57. A system of regular, recorded reviews with tutors is used to ensure that trainees have informative feedback on their progress and understand what is expected of them. Their training development officer and workplace supervisor also have access to this information. The training development officers visit trainees regularly at work to conduct progress reviews and to ensure that trainees have access to the full range of support services. Trainees are encouraged to contact the training development officer if they need any help or support, and they have additional visits if they need them. The training development officer for

hospitality trainees has no previous experience of the industry which limits the effectiveness of the training review.

58. Food preparation trainees are normally assessed while attending off-the-job training sessions at the college. These assessments are well planned. There are few qualified assessors in the workplace, but where there are work-based assessors they are effectively used to assess elements of the NVQ which the college-based assessors may be having difficulty covering. A visiting college assessor or a qualified work-based assessor assesses hotel reception trainees in their workplaces. Trainees reach an acceptable standard of skill.

59. The planning of off-the-job training is based on developing a rotating menu in the college kitchen which ensures that all the NVQ performance criteria are covered. Facilities, materials and equipment are generally good, but this environment is not realistic enough to provide the pressure which characterises a commercial kitchen.

60. There is no overall plan to link various aspects of the NVQ being studied. Training in the workplace is unplanned and often unrelated to off-the-job training. Reviews with tutors provide a good support service but do not set appropriate detailed targets for the training and assessment process.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

61. The hair and beauty department and training facilities are located in one building at the West Bromwich campus. There are 41 trainees in total: one modern apprentice, 37 national trainees, and three other trainees. Off-the-job practical training is carried out in three well-equipped salons. There are 15 tutors in the department, consisting of one section leader who is responsible for eight full-time tutors, seven part-time tutors and one assessor. The training and development officer works in close conjunction with the trainees. Trainees are based in owner-run salons in locations in and around the West Bromwich area. National trainees are following an NVQ programme at level 2 in hairdressing and a key skills package made up of information technology at level 1, application of number at level 1 and communication at level 2. Modern apprentices work towards NVQs in hairdressing at level 3 and information technology at level 1, application of number at level 1 and communication, problem solving, improve own learning, and working with others at level 3. In hair and beauty, achievement is poor. Retention in the first year of the programme is also poor. In 1998, of 35 trainees, 14 left within the first six months, a further eight leaving within a year. However, the figures for 1999 show an improvement on previous years. Of 38 national trainees, seven left in the first six months (20 per cent).

62. The self-assessment report identified eight strengths. Inspectors agreed with some of these, but others were considered to be no more than normal practice. One weakness was identified in the self-assessment report with which inspectors agreed but they also identified additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective development of key skills
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ highly motivated trainees with excellent attendance records
- ◆ well-equipped and spacious college training salons
- ◆ wide variety of training opportunities
- ◆ trainees well supported in the workplace
- ◆ all trainees encouraged to enter local and national competitions

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ details of training programmes not communicated to employers
- ◆ induction not suited to year-round programme

63. Trainees recruited by the salons spend several days working in their salon to assess their suitability and to give them a taste of the industry. Induction to the off-the-job programme includes an assessment of their dexterity and aptitude to hairdressing. Trainees also complete a key and basic skills assessment to determine their training needs. All trainees understand the findings and importance of their initial assessment. The hairdressing department also uses a process whereby trainees complete individual credits which can be built up and transferred across colleges and regions. Trainees earn two credits by completing their NVQ.

64. Key skills assignments are based on tasks and activities commonly encountered in the hairdressing industry. Key skills are particularly relevant to trainees' hairdressing training. Portfolios show well-completed key skills assignments. Trainees are given good guidelines for the learning and assessment of key skills and all assignments show original thinking and presentation. There are analysis sheets of clients and clients' record cards, together with witness statements. The software package used on the computer at reception at the off-the-job salon is industry-standard technology. One tutor from the department also teaches in the central curriculum services department, reinforcing the importance of key skills to other staff. A tutor in the hair and beauty section began work towards the key skills practitioner's award in September 1999.

65. Trainees receive good support and guidance from staff. Training is well planned and varied. Trainees have a good learning experience and this is reflected in the excellent attendance figures of 92 per cent. Trainees are punctual, any occasions where a trainee has arrived late or is seen to be falling into a late attendance pattern are dealt with immediately.

66. There are three training salons which are well equipped and spacious and provide realistic working environments. A wide range of tools, equipment and

products are available to trainees. Resource rooms have a wide range of teaching aids. Tutors are highly qualified with relevant and recent hairdressing experience.

67. Trainees have access to a wide variety of training opportunities. The three college salons are run as commercial operations and have a large reception area. These salons attract a wide range of clients from the college and the general public. This gives trainees experience of a broad mix of different clients. Trainees are encouraged to enter local, national and college-run competitions. These competitions are a good learning experience and trainees have achieved good results. Training sessions take place at least weekly and there is one tutor for every trainee. The level of skills trainees are taught at work are often higher than their training programme at college. The trainees either train during one or two afternoon or early evening sessions. All training is well supervised with industry qualified trainers.

68. The induction programme effectively introduces trainees to the college and covers equal opportunities, health and safety, the appeals procedure and explains and demonstrates the training programme. Where induction takes place as planned it is a good and informative experience. However, if trainees do not start in the September term or transfer from another programme, they do not follow the complete programme. Therefore, their understanding of these issues is sometimes poor. However, all trainees have a good understanding of health and safety issues.

69. In some salons trainers have assessor awards. These trainers have a good understanding of NVQs. Their relationship with the college is well developed and they are aware of the programmes and assessment procedures. Where there is little contact with the college, however, salon owners and trainers are not familiar with NVQs and they rely on feedback from trainees. Salon owners and trainers express a desire to be better informed about the progress of their trainees. Trainees have relevant training plans which detail their individual programmes. They also show realistic achievement dates.

70. Assessment takes place both in the college and in salons. An assessor plans assessment with the trainees and visits their workplace to assess them. The assessor completes a fully recorded procedure. Assessments are well planned and all assessment decisions are discussed with trainees. The salon owner/trainer is given feedback at the end of the assessment. Records of assessment are copied to all parties.

71. Assessment at college can be initiated by the trainee on request. A planning session is carried out at the beginning of the training day. Assessment is carried out in a realistic working environment while trainees work on salon clients. Feedback is given to trainees on the completion of the assessment and action plans are devised.

72. External verifiers' visits are regular. External verifiers' reports for both awarding bodies identify only minor issues of concern. The subsequent reports show that these matters were successfully dealt with.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

73. The college offers NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care, early years care and education, key skills at level 2 and national diploma in nursery nursing. There are 51 trainees. Two are modern apprentices, 43 are on national training programmes for young people and six are New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. In 1997, out of 48 trainees, 10 completed NVQs at level 2. In 1998-99 there were seven New Deal clients. One completed their time on the New Deal option and six left the New Deal option without employment or completing their training. Training takes place over two years. Theory training for childcare is based at the Smethwick campus. The childcare team consists of a section leader, four tutors, a training and development officer and one part-time assessor. Two of the tutors assess trainees in the workplace. Theory training for care is based at the West Bromwich campus. The care team consists of a section leader and four tutors. There is a full-time work-based care assessors' support officer and a group of visiting part-time care assessors. Staff involved in theory training are all occupationally experienced and qualified to teach. All assessment takes place in the workplace by qualified assessors or by supervisors who are working towards their assessors awards with support and supervision from college staff. Specialist staff in the college's central curriculum services department support trainees with additional learning needs. Health and safety in potential workplaces is assessed by a training and development officer who has no occupational experience but who is trained to Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) standards. She also visits trainees during their first 12 weeks in the workplace to complete a checklist of their understanding of health and safety in their workplace. New Deal clients are fully integrated into the groups of trainees and receive the same training. Trainees are recruited from schools, job centres, and employers. There are three opportunities to join the programme, in September, February and April. Trainees are able to join the programme at appropriate times, when theory training is about to start for a new unit. Those currently on the programme plan to complete their NVQs over a period of one year. In care and childcare, there is poor retention and achievement overall. In 1997-98, there were 43 childcare trainees and three care trainees on the programme. Nine childcare trainees and one care trainee completed their training plan and gained qualifications. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent and regular observations in the workplace
- ◆ opportunities for childcare trainees to take additional qualifications
- ◆ well-structured work experience in a variety of childcare settings
- ◆ good support from employers for training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some childcare trainees
- ◆ unit accreditation not available for childcare
- ◆ limited access to portfolios for trainees

74. Workplace observations of childcare trainees take place fortnightly, and monthly for care trainees. Plans for assessment, including direct observation, are negotiated by the trainee and the assessor and confirmed with the workplace supervisor. Assessors complete detailed records of observed activity and identify the performance criteria observed. Oral questions are used to confirm trainees' knowledge and understanding. Written questions and activities are used to complete each unit of the NVQ. Trainees receive immediate feedback on their competence in the workplace and this is recorded on the observation records. Copies of the observation are kept by trainees and assessors. There are qualified assessors in every workplace. Support with written work is available from college staff. Audio and video-taped evidence is also used where appropriate.

75. All off-the-job training takes place in college. Rooms are well resourced for research and learning practical skills. Childcare training takes place at the Smethwick campus and care training at the West Bromwich site. Trainees' work related to health and safety and activities in the workplace is displayed there.

76. Trainees with GCSEs at grade C or above are given the opportunity to complete a national diploma in nursery nursing at the same time as their NVQ at level 3 in early years and education. Trainees spend one week in college and one week in the workplace. The first year of their training is assignment based. At the end of the first year, activities in the workplace are observed and NVQ units are completed with written work cross-referenced from the national diploma. Trainees enjoy the challenge of taking two qualifications and recognise their value in helping them gain future employment and to progress to further training. Retention for this group of trainees is good. Only one trainee has left the programme since September 1999 when she moved away from the area.

77. Work experience is carefully planned and trainees have opportunities to work in up to three different settings throughout their training. This gives them the opportunity to experience real work and helps them to make career decisions. For example, some trainees work for one term in a school for children with special educational needs, others work in a nursery to experience working with babies. The length of time spent in different settings (12 weeks) gives them ample opportunity to complete the appropriate NVQ units. This enables trainees to demonstrate occupational experience and competence when they apply for employment in schools. When trainees change their workplace, the move is planned at least one term in advance.

78. Workplaces have up-to-date equipment. Staff are supportive of trainees and are recognised as useful sources of information by trainees. A qualified member of

staff in each room of the nursery, or a class teacher, supervises the trainees' practical work. Supervisors and trainees plan activities weekly to allow trainees to plan observations by their assessor. Senior care staff work alongside trainees during their first three months in the workplace and during morning and evening daily activities, and trainees make good use of the opportunity to amass testimonies from reliable witnesses. Care trainees have opportunities to attend additional training days arranged and paid for by their employer.

79. Care trainees are employed. They are fully integrated into the staff team and have good opportunities to complete routine and occasionally occurring activities. No trainees work night duty. The trainees work seven-and-a-half hour shifts to cover the period from 7.30 am to 10 pm. There is appropriate supervision at all times. Trainees are offered the opportunity to complete additional training, paid for by their employer. New Deal clients are fully integrated into training and work experience, and have access to additional tutorials and support.

80. Some childcare trainees completing their NVQ at level 2 have not had any assessment in the workplace and have been unable to progress through the NVQ. There have been missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace where supervisors are not yet experienced or familiar with assessment procedures. This problem has been identified and effectively addressed by the college.

81. College staff have adequate time allocated for internal verification. Internal verification of care assessors is rigorous and ongoing. The first two units completed by each care trainee and their assessor are internally verified and assessors receive detailed and constructive feedback. However, many childcare trainees have completed units which are awaiting internal verification. Childcare trainees are not able to have individual NVQ units accredited as they complete them. Therefore, trainees who leave early and who have completed part of their NVQ are not able to gain certificates for this achievement.

82. Individual training plans reflect trainees' preferred learning styles. They are updated and amended in line with TEC requirements. Portfolios are clearly referenced and well presented, and there is a flexible approach to assessment, using diverse evidence. However, portfolios are kept in college. Trainees, therefore, have limited access to them and do not always have the evidence requirements for the NVQ units that they are completing in the workplace and sometimes supervisors are not familiar with the requirements of each unit.

83. Induction is good. Childcare staff have introduced simulated occupational activities to the programme of initial assessment and induction, giving potential trainees good experience before starting their training.

84. Training for key skills is carried out at the college by a subject specialist and time is allocated on each trainee's individual learning plan. Care staff have compiled assignments for key skills which relate to the occupational area.

85. In care and childcare, staff development is good and staff continue to work in

their occupational areas to keep up to date with current practice and ensure that they comply with professional bodies' requirements.

86. The college has a formal agreement with a university which gives trainees good opportunities to progress to higher education. Trainees who complete their NVQ level 3 programmes and wish to progress to a health practitioner degree are guaranteed an interview.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

87. Sandwell College has a detailed equal opportunities policy which applies to staff, trainees and employers. It was last reviewed in 1997. The policy and related procedures are contained in the staff handbook and issued to all staff during induction. The trainees receive a summary version of the policy during induction and it also appears in other documents they receive throughout their programme. The college employs an equal opportunities co-ordinator. The director of human resources and student services is responsible for implementing the equal opportunities policy. The equal opportunities committee meets monthly and reports directly to senior management. Equal opportunities data are collected through the registration process and collated information is distributed to management groups within the college. There is a formal complaints procedure. The self-assessment report did not recognise all the strengths and weaknesses in this area. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities by senior management
- ◆ equal opportunities included in staff induction and staff development programmes
- ◆ active college equal opportunities committee
- ◆ systematic collection and monitoring of equal opportunities data
- ◆ successful recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low priority given to equality of opportunity in some workplaces
- ◆ inadequate use of equal opportunities data
- ◆ poor awareness of equal opportunities issues among some trainees

88. The college has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, with clear

GOOD PRACTICE

In a retail training session, handouts and case studies used were extracted from an Asian trade publication and a newspaper article about workers in Asian toy factories. This was appropriate for the ethnic mix within the group of trainees.

and detailed policies and procedures. The principal and senior managers give strong support to the equal opportunities co-ordinator and they are active in promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and trainees. Specialist resources are readily available to trainees with physical and sensory disabilities. The principal and chair of governors subscribe, on behalf of the college, to the West Midlands Employers' Network for Disability, which promotes and shares good practice in dealing with disability in the workplace.

89. All staff receive a copy of the equal opportunities policy which is reinforced by the equal opportunities co-ordinator during induction. Staff development and support is available and is effective in raising awareness of equal opportunities issues. Training and development officers are trained to recognise and address problems related to equality of opportunity in the workplace.

90. The college's equal opportunities committee is well established and actively monitors the implementation of the policy. The committee is well represented by staff across the college and has clear terms of reference. It produces an action plan which is regularly monitored and some improvements can be directly attributed to this group. For example, after the committee analysed the equal opportunities data on college staff, a clear statement inviting applications from all minority groups was added to advertisements for staff appointments. The proportion of minority ethnic groups in Sandwell is 14.8 per cent and 10 per cent of the college staff are from minority ethnic groups. This figure is increasing. The college systematically collects equal opportunities data on trainees through its recruitment and registration systems. This is primarily for TEC purposes, but it is routinely distributed to managers across the college. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups is 16.7 per cent. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups in business administration, retail and customer services, and leisure, sport and travel is particularly high.

91. Although managers are encouraged to act on any issues identified in equal opportunities information, the response in some areas is poor. Gender stereotyping is evident in some occupational areas. Hairdressing, automotive and care sectors have a gender imbalance and sometimes staff do not actively address this. In hairdressing, the number of trainees recruited from minority ethnic groups is small. In 1998, it was 5.7 per cent and in 1999 it was 7 per cent. However, the college has devised special hair and beauty lessons to attract trainees from minority ethnic groups. In the same area, the proportion of male trainees recruited was 8.5 per cent in 1998 and only 2.3 per cent in 1999. Childcare training staff have run campaigns aimed at recruiting male trainees and have achieved some success.

92. Equal opportunities issues are raised during induction and the trainees receive a summarised version of the policy. Despite this, some trainees have no awareness of the content of the policy and others have a narrow interpretation of what constitutes equality of opportunity. Their understanding of the issues is often limited to discrimination against people on the basis of gender or ethnic background.

93. If employers do not have their own policy they are asked to subscribe to the college's policy. However, there is little systematic monitoring of employers' compliance with the college's equal opportunities requirements. In some cases, employers have no understanding of their responsibilities towards providing equality of opportunity for trainees in the workplace. Marketing and publicity materials are used to promote equal opportunities. They state that the college is an equal opportunities employer and that it welcomes applications from trainees from all parts of the community. This appears in several languages on the front of some publications.

Trainee support

Grade 2

94. Trainees are enrolled as students of the college with full access to all the support and extra curricular services of the college. Many trainees are recruited as a result of open days, and other recruitment activities aimed at all potential trainees. There are 'taster' sessions held in the summer for many courses. An advice shop at the entrance of each main campus provides initial careers and training advice and refers prospective trainees and students to more specialist advisors as appropriate. All prospective trainees are interviewed to assess their suitability for a training programme and advice is given on appropriate courses. An induction programme is provided for all students at the time of major enrolments and this is attended by trainees who start at these times. Specialists in the central curriculum services unit on each campus teach key skills to trainees. The self-assessment report contained strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Additional weaknesses were identified, but inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly wide range of support services available
- ◆ rapid resolution of trainees' potential problems
- ◆ systematic initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ effective rotation of work placements to ensure coverage of qualifications in most areas
- ◆ extra reviews for New Deal clients in most areas

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of effective accreditation of trainees' prior learning and experience
- ◆ lack of awareness by some trainees of appeals procedures

95. The college's support services are comprehensive and effectively meet the needs of trainees. The drop-in advice shop provides an alternative to tutor referral for trainees wishing to gain access to any of the college's advisory or support services. These include specialist units devoted to welfare support, financial advice, learning support for basic skills and for a range of learning and physical

disabilities, a nursery and a careers advice service. To avoid any possible discrimination, the support services do not distinguish between trainees on different programmes. This means that accurate statistical information on the use made of each service by TEC-funded trainees is not available. They have, however, successfully used all the support services on offer.

96. Training development officers and tutors are alert to the possibility of problems. The recently introduced training development officers' log shows concerns that were potential official complaints and how they have been addressed. For example, if it is appropriate, trainees are easily and quickly able to change work placements if they are encountering difficulties or are not happy at their present one.

97. Key skills assessment packages have been introduced across the college to identify the needs of trainees. The tutors who teach and assess key skills encourage trainees to work at a pace appropriate to their knowledge and abilities and they continuously review each trainee's needs.

98. Learning packages have been prepared by central curriculum services staff for use at induction. These cover such topics as employees' rights. However, they are not used for all trainees, only those who are in employment or in work placements. When trainees first start there is sometimes a delay finding a suitable work placement but appropriate placements are normally found within three weeks. Some placements are not able to provide the full range of experience needed to cover the elements in the NVQ framework. In this case, trainees are moved to other areas within the workplace or to alternative workplaces which can provide the necessary experience. In some cases, trainees move every six months on a work placement rota to ensure that appropriate experience is obtained.

99. Trainees who use the support services of the college consider them to be accessible, helpful and effective. This is confirmed in those support units that carry out their own evaluation using questionnaires. The advice shops help to ensure that trainees have access to support. Trainees may refer themselves, or be referred by their tutor or their training development officer.

GOOD PRACTICE

Two trainees who are single parents have been given subsidised places in the college nursery to enable them to undertake training. As TEC funds were not available to cover this support for one trainee, funds from a charitable trust were obtained by the college support service.

100. The progress of New Deal clients is closely monitored during the initial phase of their options. During their first six weeks, they are given additional support. They have frequent additional meetings with their training development officer to review their training and activities.

101. There is no systematic identification or accreditation of trainees' prior learning. Many trainees who have recently taken related qualifications such as GNVQs at an equivalent level are not advised that they might be able to use some evidence from their previous programme towards their present qualification and the suitability of such evidence is often not assessed. For example, in care and childcare, trainees who have completed key skills as part of a previous training programme have not been accredited with this. In engineering, no effort is made to identify or assess any prior learning.

102. Both the college's formal appeals procedure and the NVQ appeals procedure are available for trainees who feel that they have been treated unfairly. The procedure is outlined in the student handbook which is given to trainees at induction. However, the continuous recruitment of trainees means that some of them have not received this information and do not know that it is possible to appeal.

Management of training

Grade 3

103. At Sandwell College, the head of workforce development is responsible for work-based training and the New Deal. This post has been in existence since January 2001 following a major reorganisation of the college's management structure. The head of workforce development reports directly to the deputy principal along with the heads of curriculum responsible for all other learning programmes in the college. This gives work-based training and New Deal equal management status with the college's other learning programmes. The workforce development department subcontracts off-the-job training and assessment for work-based training and the New Deal to the other curriculum areas in the college on the basis of a written internal agreement. All trainers are qualified in teaching or training or are working towards such qualifications. Training and development officers working for the workforce development department review trainees' progress in the workplace at least every 13 weeks. Assessors, internal verifiers and training and development officers in each occupational area meet three times a year. There are regular meetings at all management levels within the college at which work-based training is discussed. Minutes of all meetings are kept. They contain action points relating to individual trainees. Implementation of the actions is followed up at subsequent meetings. All staff have an annual appraisal and a personal development plan. Information on trainees, their progress and achievements is held on the college's main computer system. Data on the system are up to date. However, the system itself is inflexible and managers had difficulty supplying accurate information to inspectors in a different format to that normally used for reporting to the TEC and to the Employment Service.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates in most areas
- ◆ little understanding of qualifications and frameworks by many employers
- ◆ little key skills assessment in all areas
- ◆ few NVQ assessments at work in many areas
- ◆ poor links between on- and off-the-job training

104. Since the first inspection, retention and achievement rates have improved in most occupational areas. Trainees' progress towards their qualifications has been aided by the introduction of work-based assessment in all areas. Employers still have little understanding of apprenticeship frameworks and NVQs. Training and assessment in key skills still predominantly take place in the college, although

more evidence from the workplace is used. Ten trainees have completed their key skills units since the first inspection, compared with 11 in the previous year. These were the first trainees to do so. There are still poor links between on- and off-the-job training. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear management responsibility for work-based training
- ◆ good staff development opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ little involvement of employers in the NVQ process

105. There is a sound strategy for managing work-based training as a result of the organisational and curriculum changes that have occurred. The head of workforce development now has direct responsibility for work-based training and the New Deal throughout the college. This ensures that these programmes have parity with all other curriculum areas and full representation at the heads of curriculum meetings which are held every three weeks. It also ensures that all work-based and New Deal training is consistently managed throughout the college. There is more contact with, and interest in these programmes by senior managers who are frequently reminded of their importance within the college and in the wider community. Channels of communication between the head of workforce development and the other curriculum areas facilitate regular discussion of work-based training by all staff who provide off-the-job training and assess and monitor trainees in work placements. There is good co-ordination of provision across all occupational areas. As a result of the organisational changes, additional training and development officers, assessors and personal tutors have been appointed. Trainees now receive a higher level of service than they did under the previous managerial structure. The new arrangements are being actively monitored for their overall effectiveness and for their impact on trainees and their training programmes.

106. There are good staff development opportunities for all full- and part-time teaching and support staff in the college. Staff development is included in the college's corporate and business plans. There is a systematic approach to the identification of staff training needs which begins at the time of their appointment. All newly appointed staff undertake induction training. As their training needs become apparent during their probationary period, these are addressed. Staff development is discussed during the annual appraisal interview and appropriate ways of addressing the staff's identified needs are considered. There is a well-publicised and extensive range of staff training programmes run in the college. These include stress management, health and safety, the Internet, presentational

skills, key skills and the assessor awards. The college is extending staff development opportunities in curriculum planning, teaching, learning and assessment. Staff also attend a range of externally taught programmes. There are effective mechanisms for enabling staff, who have attended training events, to acquaint their colleagues with the main issues that arise from them. All participating members of staff evaluate the training they have received. Summaries of the evaluations are given to the staff development manager and copies are submitted to the governing body's resources subcommittee. The information is used to improve the design and provision of future internal courses. The college offers employers the opportunity to have members of their staff trained as trainers or assessors free of charge. One work-placement provider, who is a sole trader, is being trained as a trainer.

107. Some on- and off-the-job training is poorly co-ordinated. Some training programmes lack coherence. There are no on-the-job training plans. Much on-the-job training consists of trainees obtaining experience in an unplanned and unstructured way. Trainees do not always see the link between their off-the-job training and their on-the-job experiences. They are unsure how their training contributes to the NVQ programme. Some trainees do not understand the relevance of key skills which are taught in college and are unsure of the relationship between key skills and the NVQs. Some trainees do not have long-term plans which would enable them and their workplace supervisors to link on-the-job training to off-the-job training. Few employers are involved in planning training with college staff. The failure to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training diminishes the effectiveness of the students' training and reduces opportunities for integrating key skills with vocational training.

108. Employers are insufficiently involved in the NVQ process. Although efforts have been made by the college to inform employers of, and include them in, work-based training and the New Deal, there has been little improvement since the first inspection. Many employers do not understand the unit-based structure of NVQs, how they are taught and assessed, and how key skills can be integrated with them. Employers place emphasis on the work trainees do rather than on their training. This adversely affects the coherence, relevance and effectiveness of trainees' experiences. Employers are inadequately involved in assessing trainees' competencies and in communicating their findings to the college. Few employers are present when the training and development officers review trainees' progress. Employers are invited to meetings of course teams and assessors but they rarely attend. Many employers wish to be more closely involved in discussions about on- and off-the-job training and about trainees' progress, but opportunities for more frequent involvement of employers are missed. This results in some trainees taking longer than necessary to complete their NVQs.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

109. Overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with the director of quality and performance who reports to the deputy principal. There are written quality assurance procedures for work-based training. These include procedures for the

recruitment, selection, initial assessment, induction, training, and assessment and of trainees. The college has the ISO 9002 quality standard. New staff are given information on the quality assurance system and their responsibilities for quality assurance during their induction to the college. The college carries out regular audits of its quality assurance system according to a pre-determined schedule. Staff carrying out audits are trained as auditors. Sessions are regularly observed in order to monitor the quality of teaching and training.

110. There is a chief internal verifier and three lead internal verifiers. They are responsible for monitoring, evaluating and standardising internal verification across the college. There are 77 internal verifiers working across all sections of the college. Internal verifiers visit trainees in the workplace to observe assessments and to question trainees. The director of quality and performance reviews all the reports which are written by the chief and lead internal verifiers and the awarding bodies' external verifiers. The college has a set of performance indicators which include the retention and achievement rates of the trainees on work-based training. Targets are set for each of these performance indicators and progress towards achieving the targets is monitored regularly by the senior management team. The college regularly gathers the views of trainees and employers through questionnaires and by means of individual interviews. The self-assessment process is the responsibility of the director of quality and performance and involves staff in all sections of the college. The college's senior management team monitors the implementation of the resulting action plan at its regular meetings.

At the first inspection, the weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor internal verification in most areas
- ◆ no reference to government-funded trainees or clients in quality team's terms of reference
- ◆ no explicit mention of the rights and responsibilities of work-based trainees in student charter
- ◆ no reference to New Deal clients in self-assessment report
- ◆ many proposed improvements not subject to review

111. Internal verification is now satisfactory across the college. There are references to government-funded trainees and New Deal clients in the terms of reference of the quality and performance unit, and in the self-assessment report. The student charter includes the rights and responsibilities of work-based trainees. Proposed improvements in the quality of training are reviewed by the senior management team or the quality and performance unit. There are procedures to ensure the consistency of these reviews. The self-assessment report provides a clear description of the quality assurance process. The inspectors agreed with most of the judgements contained within the report. Some were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice or to relate to other occupational areas. The inspectors awarded a higher grade than given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective self-assessment process
- ◆ good action planning for continuous improvement in the quality of training
- ◆ effective sharing of good practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent application of some quality assurance arrangements

112. The self-assessment process is thorough. It is applied consistently across the college and is effective. Staff are involved in the process and support the outcomes. Judgements are based on sound evidence. The action planning process is good. It addresses the key issues. The implementation and effectiveness of actions which are taken are monitored. The quality assurance process has led to a number of improvements in the quality of training. For example, the internal verification process has been revised and additional quality assurance procedures have been introduced. The increased monitoring of internal verification has identified a number of weaknesses which have been rectified. The college identified that only 4 per cent of New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option were gaining employment. This was much lower than the target set by the Employment Service. An action plan was developed to deal with this problem. This resulted in a dedicated job-search facility with full-time staff being set up. The employment rate for New Deal clients is now 26 per cent.

113. Good practice is effectively shared between the various sections of the college. For example, at the first inspection, internal verification was found to have weaknesses in most sections of the college, but there were some areas of good practice. The good practice within the college has now been identified and shared. The internal verification handbook has been revised. The planning of internal verification has improved. There is more consistency in the college's approach to internal verification and in the recording of internal verification across the college. There are now observations of assessors' performance in the workplace across all sections of the college. There are standardisation meetings for assessors, and also for staff involved in the training and assessment of key skills. The management of the New Deal has been reorganised so that it is now the responsibility of a New Deal Manager. Previously, each section managed its own part of the New Deal contract. The centralisation of the management of New Deal has led to good communications between sections. This has helped identify good practice and has led to its implementation throughout the college. Initial assessments of New Deal clients are thorough and consistent throughout the college. The New Deal mentoring service is ahead of its target for the number of clients supported.

114. Not all quality assurance arrangements are consistently applied. The self-assessment report identified that not all staff are fully aware of what is expected of them. Trainees' action plans are incomplete. Qualifications required by the



framework are not always included in the trainees' plans. The level of key skills towards which trainees are working is not always recorded. Some management information is inaccurate. The results from the questionnaires which are designed to identify trainees and employers' views on the training programmes, are not communicated back to trainees and employers. Some employers do not remember being asked for their views and are reluctant to raise issues with the college. The trainees' review form has sections to be completed on both sides of a single sheet. The trainees and employers only receive a copy of the front side of the form.