

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
FEBRUARY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
APRIL 2001

Pelcombe Training Limited



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learn*direct provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Pelcombe Training Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for retailing and customer service, and hospitality. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with areas being reinspected have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Pelcombe Training Limited provides good engineering training. The practical training is good and employers are actively involved in the trainees' progress reviews. Foundation for work training is also good, supported by a high standard of resources and high achievement rates. Training in construction, business administration and hairdressing is satisfactory. At the original inspection, the training provided in retailing and customer service and hospitality was less than satisfactory. There was weak assessment practice, insufficient planned training and trainees were making slow progress towards their qualifications. These weaknesses have now been remedied. There are effective individual training programmes in hospitality. Pelcombe Training Limited's approach to equal opportunities is good and the related policy and procedures are rigorously implemented. Support for trainees is good, with well-planned inductions and excellent support from employers. The organisation has strong links with external organisations and has developed effective partnerships with other training providers. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, although Pelcombe Training Limited does not evaluate its assessment and internal verification procedures to the same extent that it evaluates its training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	2
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	4
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	3
Foundation for work	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned and well-structured training in engineering
- ◆ rigorous assessment and internal verification in engineering
- ◆ well-designed individual training programmes in hospitality
- ◆ high achievement rates in foundation for work
- ◆ strong links with external agencies
- ◆ rigorous implementation of equal opportunities policy
- ◆ well-planned key skills training in many occupational areas

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of placements for information technology training
- ◆ some ineffective management of subcontractors
- ◆ poor retention rates in construction

INTRODUCTION

1. Pelcombe Training Limited (Pelcombe Training) was formed in January 1998 following a management buy-out of the training division from Pelcombe Group Limited. Pelcombe Training provides government-funded training, working originally with Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk & Waveney Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and now with the relevant Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs). For the original inspection, Essex TEC was identified as the lead TEC. This role is now being carried out by Essex LLSC. Pelcombe Training also provides professional training for local business and industry.

2. Pelcombe Training provides training for young people and adults. Training programmes include foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, other work-based training for young people and work-based training for adults. Some training is provided through formal arrangements with local employers and other training providers. Occupational areas covered includes construction, engineering, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty, media and design, care and foundation for work. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3.

3. Pelcombe Training has partnerships with several New Deal providers in the area and has a contract for Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)-funded training. Pelcombe Training has two private sector lead contracts for New Deal 25+ in Leicestershire and Rutland and in South Humber. The head office is in Colchester, with additional sites in Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and South Humber. Training takes place in Colchester, Ipswich, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Staffing levels had increased by 50 per cent in the two years up to the time of the original inspection, with approximately 32 per cent of staff actually involved in training. At the time of the original inspection, there were 301 trainees on training programmes including 81 modern apprentices, 99 national trainees, 64 trainees on other youth training programmes and 57 adults. In addition, there were 16 New Deal clients and 22 trainees on SRB-funded programmes and seven attending a rehabilitation programme, none of which are TEC-funded. In April 2001, there were 266 young people in training including 99 advanced and 130 foundation modern apprentices and 37 on NVQ training. There are 119 adults in work-based training, together with 29 New Deal clients and 14 other trainees on rehabilitation and SRB programmes.

4. Suffolk is predominantly a rural county with three large urban centres, Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds. The working population in Suffolk is approximately 412,000 with an estimated 77 per cent in employment. At the time of the original inspection the unemployment rate was 3.8 per cent in Ipswich and 3.1 per cent in the country as a whole. By April 2001, unemployment had fallen to 2.8 per cent across the county but had remained at 3.8 per cent in Ipswich. Around 2 per cent of the population were from minority ethnic groups with the highest

proportion in Ipswich, 5.3 per cent. Ninety-one per cent of employers are small and medium-sized enterprises. The main areas of employment are in transport and communications, public administration, education and health, distribution, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, banking, finance and insurance. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. This proportion had risen slightly to 49.4 per cent in 2000 and again was similar to the national average, of 49.7 per cent.

5. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate in Colchester was 3.1 per cent and 4.1 per cent in Essex as a whole. These ratios compared well with the national average of 5 per cent. In April 2001, the unemployment rate across Essex had fallen to 2.6 per cent but had remained at 3.1 per cent in Colchester and its surrounding areas. This area has a wide range of local jobs available. The main industries are financial services, distribution, hotels and transport. These account for 29 per cent of the total employment in the area. Computing is an area of growth and engineering and manufacturing are declining. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 44 per cent in Colchester and 48.6 in Essex, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, this proportion had risen to 48.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.7 per cent. Seventy-three per cent of school leavers in the Colchester/Tendring areas opt to stay on in full-time education.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Pelcombe Training produced its first self-assessment report in September 1998. A second report was produced in September 1999. Pelcombe Training's training director involved most of the staff, across most of its training centres, in the self-assessment process. An external consultant was recruited to help with this. Pelcombe Training produced a comprehensive and detailed self-assessment report and action plan for its original inspection. The report accurately identified strengths and weaknesses and several of the action points had been addressed before inspection. After the inspection, Pelcombe Training produced a detailed action plan which was updated three times before the reinspection, with weaknesses being remedied, and strengths being built upon. A third self-assessment report, based upon widespread consultation with staff, was produced in February 2001, two months before the reinspection. A detailed action plan was included. This self-assessment report was well written, accurate and informative. The action plan was updated just before the reinspection and recorded that many of the identified weaknesses had been rectified.

7. A team of nine inspectors spent a total of 34 days at Pelcombe Training in February 2000. Inspectors visited 15 employers, 30 work-placement providers, and two subcontractors. Inspectors spoke with 105 of the 346 trainees, 18 workplace supervisors and had 53 discussions with Pelcombe Training's staff. They observed seven training sessions and examined a wide range of paperwork including trainees' files and portfolios of evidence, audit reports from TECs and awarding bodies, records of staff meetings, personnel records and policies and procedures.

8. Four inspectors reinspected the two occupational areas of retailing and customer service and hospitality using the *Common Inspection Framework*. They spent 12 days at Pelcombe Training and interviewed 20 trainees at their work placements and places of employment. They visited 10 work placements and interviewed eight workplace supervisors. They conducted seven interviews with members of Pelcombe Training's staff and one with a member of staff from a subcontractor. They examined 18 individual training plans and 13 learners' portfolios. They reviewed internal and external verifiers' reports, action plans, records of meetings, management records and quality assurance arrangements.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction						
Engineering	1	1				2
Business administration		2	1			3
Retailing & customer service						
Hospitality						
Hair & beauty						
Foundation for work			2			2
Total	1	3	3	0	0	7

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

9. Pelcombe Training has a total of 17 trainees/clients in this occupational area. Eight are national trainees, three are on a work-based training for adults programme and five are New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. There is also one trainee in the Gateway who is training in hand skills and has yet to have a confirmed training programme. Trainees work towards NVQs at level 2 in wood occupations. The two New Deal clients are working towards a basic woodworking hand skills qualification. Two national trainees are employed; the others are trained and assessed at one of the Pelcombe Training's centres. The construction training area in the centre comprises a bench workshop, machine shop, trainees' study area, and roofing, partition work, kitchen unit fitting, door and window fitting, office and storage areas. Employed trainees are on site for four days each week and spend a further day in the training centre for theory training. Other trainees attend the training centre full time. Key skills are taught as part of the NVQ programme with information technology taught separately. Some strengths identified in the self-assessment report were considered to be no more than normal practice. However, inspectors agreed with the weaknesses, identified other strengths and awarded the same grade as that given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent assessment opportunities
- ◆ good systems for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ well-planned key skills training
- ◆ rigorous assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ lack of work placements
- ◆ little progression to employment
- ◆ some tools and equipment do not meet industry standards

10. Trainees receive good training from well-qualified and experienced trainers and all trainees are actively involved in all aspects of the training programme. Pelcombe Training has a wide range of training resources within their own workshops at one of the centres. Trainers encourage trainees to work independently and take responsibility for their own training. Staff have developed many written and practical assignments which are used effectively by trainees. These are monitored and assessed at the end of each training week and trainees given feedback on their performance. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training and attend regularly.

11. The provider has a comprehensive monitoring system, which enables the trainer to record accurate details of trainees' activities and achievements. Employed trainees make good use of their work evidence record diary to record activities undertaken in the workplace. These activities are countersigned by the work-based supervisor and used as evidence towards the NVQ. However, there is sometimes an over-reliance on this type of workplace evidence.

12. Key skills training is well planned and great care is taken by staff to relate key skills to NVQ evidence. Trainees collect evidence from a wide range of sources and where this satisfies the key skills criteria it is recorded in the trainees' key skills portfolios. Information technology is taught separately in the training centre by a qualified trainer. Many portfolios are well structured and organised and contain good-quality documentary evidence towards the NVQ. The assessment process is rigorous and trainees' competence is accurately and fairly assessed. The documentation for assessment planning, assessment briefs, assessment outcomes and feedback to trainees is good. Trainees are fully aware of the assessment process, which units they have achieved and the units to be completed. There is a consistent achievement rate of 80 per cent for those completing their programmes.

13. Although the initial assessment process is satisfactory, retention rates for this occupational area are poor and have remained constant at approximately 50 per cent for the last two years. Over 90 per cent of employers are small- and medium-sized enterprises and construction is not a major sector of employment for the areas covered by Pelcombe Training and there are limited opportunities for work placements in wood occupations. Only two trainees are currently employed. Of the trainees who are not employed and complete their training, few gain employment.

14. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and little assessment of NVQs in the workplace. The training activities at the centre do not

always relate to the range of experiences in the workplace or the requirements of the vocational qualification. Job-search assistance is available and trainees are encouraged to attend these sessions but few trainees take up the opportunity.

15. Some tools and equipment used in the training centre are old and worn and not consistent with the standards of the industry. The provider is aware of this issue and some new tools have been purchased as a direct result of feedback from trainees.

Engineering

Grade 2

16. Pelcombe Training offers youth and adult engineering training at two of its centres. There are 85 engineering trainees in mechanical, electrical/electronic engineering and welding and fabrication. There are 30 modern apprentices following level 3 engineering production in technical services, 35 national trainees following NVQs at level 2 in engineering foundation leading to level 3, 12 trainees on work-based training for adults programmes, and eight trainees on other youth NVQ programmes. Six clients are on the New Deal full-time education and training option. Most trainees are employed and attend Pelcombe Training's centre one day each week for practical training. Trainees attend local colleges of further education for vocational qualifications. Where trainees are unable to attend Pelcombe Training's centres, supplementary practical training is carried out by the provider's staff and employers. Placements for employed trainees cover a variety of industrial operations such as electrical plant maintenance, refrigeration services, photocopying servicing, container welding companies, fabrication and material manufacturing companies. In 1998-99, approximately 60 per cent of trainees completed youth training programmes, and an average of 80 per cent completed adult programmes. On average, 50 per cent of youth trainees achieved an NVQ compared with 80 per cent of adults. Over 80 per cent of youth trainees gained full-time employment. Inspectors agreed with the findings of the self-assessment report, identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than the one given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective practical training
- ◆ rigorous assessment and internal verification
- ◆ good monitoring of NVQ progress
- ◆ active involvement of employers in review and action-planning processes
- ◆ additional training opportunities available

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient planning of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ some poor health and safety monitoring of workshops

17. Training is offered across a wide range of engineering activities and is carried out by highly qualified and experienced training staff. During the initial planning, the experiences and skills of individual trainees are assessed and used to produce their training plans. In adult training in particular, programmes are well matched to their individual needs. For example, one trainee with extensive turning experience was offered additional milling and screwing training opportunities linked to appropriate NVQ units. Good physical training resources are available for the well-planned foundation training programme. Other practical training carried out in the provider's workshops and on employers' premises is well structured. Training is planned to allow trainees to progress at their own pace through the training programme. In some cases, trainees are moved between various departments within companies to increase the range of opportunities. Trainees often observe tasks being carried out and are then allowed to attempt the task under guidance before finally carrying it out uninterrupted. Key skills are taught effectively.

18. Reviews of trainees' progress on tasks and towards the NVQ is thorough and well recorded. The information recorded by individual tutors is shared with the engineering manager which allows for clear and effective individual target setting. Trainees use a wide range of evidence sources including photography, witness testimonies and observations of their performance by assessors to provide evidence for their portfolios. Assessors also take advantage of opportunities to record instances of naturally occurring evidence. All employers take part in progress reviews and are actively involved with the action planning and target setting process.

19. Internal verification is well planned and managed and there is good communication between centres. Sampling and recording of assessments is thorough and there are frequent meetings between assessors and verifiers where trainees' progress and programme development is discussed. These meetings are formally recorded.

20. Trainees in work placements are offered the opportunity to gain additional supporting qualifications. These serve to meet employers needs and enable trainees to improve their future employment prospects. One individual gained a welding certificate at national standards level for overhead and vertical weld. This qualification was of particular importance and of benefit to the employer as well as being a good personal development for the trainee.

21. Although good-quality training is carried out at Pelcombe Training's centres and on employers' premises, on- and off-the-job training are not always linked. Tasks set at centres reflect current working practices, but there is often poor co-ordination between individual trainees' work experiences and NVQ requirements. Equipment used within the centres is sufficient for providing training in basic engineering operations. Some equipment reflects dated technology particularly the computerised numerical control machines. Trainees sometimes work without the

required protective equipment. Regular maintenance programmes are required within the company's procedures, but one centre carries out corrective rather than preventative maintenance.

Business administration

Grade 3

22. There are 104 trainees following business administration programmes in administration and information technology, which is provided at two of the centres. Of these, 22 are modern apprentices following NVQs at level 3 in administration, 33 are national trainees following level 2 administration and 11 are young people following other training options. Thirty-eight trainees are on work-based training for adult programmes taking NVQs at level 2. A small number of these adult trainees progress to NVQs at level 3 in information technology and administration, and achieve their qualifications through supervising the level 2 trainees. Three New Deal clients are following the full-time education and training option, while 22 are on a SRB-funded training programme and six are enrolled on a rehabilitation programme. Staff from Pelcombe Training are responsible for training and assessment. Assessors are usually responsible for trainees in specific geographical areas. In-house training takes place in specialist training rooms which are equipped to industry standards. Trainees are on work placements or are employed in a variety of companies in both the private and public sector. In some instances where placements are not readily available, trainees undertake real work for Pelcombe Training. Trainees who are unable to attend Pelcombe Training's centre receive coaching in the workplace on a one-to-one basis during assessors' visits. Achievement rates are 63.5 per cent in Suffolk and 67.9 per cent in Essex. Inspectors considered that some of the many strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice and some related to generic aspects. One of the weaknesses had been addressed by the time of inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive training materials for business administration
- ◆ well-planned key skills training
- ◆ effective assessment process
- ◆ additional training opportunities available

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ few information technology placements
- ◆ some training lacks structure
- ◆ some slow progress towards NVQ achievement

23. Trainees are given good-quality training packs containing comprehensive

information to help them to identify and gather suitable evidence from the workplace. During the last year the quality of portfolios has improved and the trainees manage their own training more effectively. They take ownership of their portfolio of evidence. Most employers actively support trainees by providing additional advice and information for their portfolios.

24. All trainees are provided with key skills packs and given a good introduction to key skills at the start of their training programme. Staff, who act as both tutors and assessors, ensure that trainees are fully aware of the ways in which the evidence in the workplace is linked to the key skills units. Trainees are clear about the level of key skills required. All evidence produced by trainees is checked for validity and then cross-referenced to key skills at the same time as it is referenced to the NVQ units. The process is thorough and effective and ensures that trainees are able to progress through their key skills and NVQ at the same time.

25. Assessors visit trainees frequently and often spend substantial periods of time working with them. These visits are often made on a fortnightly basis and there are close and effective working relationships between trainees and assessors. Assessment planning is good. Trainees and assessors are given copies of the detailed written assessment plans. Some workplace supervisors provide witness testimonies for trainees. Where trainee assessors are undertaking assessment, a qualified assessor oversees and countersigns their judgements.

26. Additional qualifications in computer skills such as computer literacy and information technology and text processing are offered to trainees. These additional training opportunities are offered during evenings at the training centres for those trainees in full-time employment. Work from these sessions is also used for key skills evidence. Over 37 per cent of trainees obtain employment after their training course finishes.

27. Around 80 per cent of trainees taking the information technology qualification attend the centres on a full-time basis, mainly due to a lack of work placements. However, in these circumstances evidence for portfolios is not generated under realistic working conditions. Awarding bodies' reports note the lack of work-based evidence. Evidence is generated mainly from work sheets and projects, although some trainees do sometimes produce work for Pelcombe Training's staff. The provider has recognised this weakness and has taken some remedial action. For example, trainees are no longer enrolling on the information technology NVQ unless they have a suitable work placement. Portfolios of evidence are satisfactory.

28. Computer training is mainly informal and unstructured. Trainees take responsibility for their own pace of training and are supported by staff or trainees following a level 3 programme. Much of the individual support is for portfolio building with few formal training sessions. Business administration trainees who attend the training centres for off-the-job training also receive help with portfolio building. Some specific training, such as in telephone techniques is also carried out on these days. Training is not effectively structured, and realistic and challenging

targets are not set for trainees. Though the final target achievement dates are set and trainees' progress is regularly reviewed, interim achievement targets are not systematically set.

29. The progress of some trainees is slow, with some taking a year to achieve two units of the NVQ. A small number of trainees are taking the maximum time available on their programme to gain their NVQ. There is, however, some evidence of improvement in achievement times for trainees who started during the past year.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

30. There are 24 learners in retailing and customer service in the following programme areas:

NVQ	Foundation modern apprentices	Advanced modern apprentices	New Deal clients	Adult work-based learners
Distribution and warehousing level 2	2	0	0	0
Customer service level 2	2	0	1	2
Customer service level 3	0	1	0	0
Retailing level 2	13	1	0	0
Retailing level 3	0	2	0	0
Total	17	4	1	2

Learners are recruited through direct marketing to employers and referrals from the careers service and other agencies. Learners may join the training programme at any time. Most learners are employed in medium-sized businesses in Essex and Suffolk. Pelcombe Training employs two trainer/assessors and one training co-ordinator. Pelcombe Training's staff visit learners in the workplace to undertake inductions, review progress, and to carry out assessments. There are no work-based assessors. Internal verification is undertaken by the training officer, with additional support available from the head of department. All assessors and verifiers are occupationally competent and appropriately qualified. Twenty-four people enrolled in training programmes in retailing and customer service during 2000-01, compared with 11 in 1999-2000 and three in 1998-99. The retention rate of learners for the year 2000-01 was 87 per cent. Of the 39 who have left since 1997-98, 18 have achieved an NVQ.

At the original inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some slow NVQ progress and achievement
- ◆ lack of effective target-setting
- ◆ lack of commitment to NVQ process by employers
- ◆ insufficient planned training

31. An action plan was produced to deal with these weaknesses. Subsequent actions have led to improvements in target-setting and training and employers are now more involved in the NVQ training process. Action is still being taken to address the slow progress and achievement of learners. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and all of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They found an additional strength and awarded the same grade as that given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough and well-planned assessment process
- ◆ frequent and detailed monitoring of learners' progress
- ◆ good use of diverse evidence

GOOD PRACTICE

Learners are issued with an information sheet which outlines the typical tasks expected from a sales/customer service assistant. Against each activity, reference is made to how the task relates to units of their NVQ and key skills. This guidance document helps the learners to identify how their work relates to their qualifications.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed start to assessing NVQs
- ◆ slow implementation of key skills

32. Assessors carefully monitor learners' progress and produce a weekly report on their visits. The report records all agreed actions, outcomes and any issues affecting either the learner or employer. Details of assessments undertaken, with confirmation of any units having been achieved, are recorded. Details of learners' achievement of NVQ units are logged on a monitoring sheet which is issued to all

the company's managers and assessors each week. Employers discuss this information with assessors and verifiers to review the progress being made by learners. This system allows Pelcombe Training and employers to plan any additional training which learners require. Details of the units achieved are also recorded in the learners' portfolios of evidence. All trainees have a good knowledge of their progress so far.

33. Assessors visit learners frequently, often on a fortnightly basis, and spend substantial periods of time working with them. In some cases, visits occur more frequently. Assessment planning is good. Both learners and assessors have copies of agreed assessment plans. Learners know what they have to do for the next assessment through effective short-term target-setting. After each assessment, written feedback is given to the learner. Although employers are not given copies of agreed assessment plans, some organise work schedules so that the learner can produce the evidence required for the assessment. Some employers also provide witness testimonies. Most employers are now effectively involved in the NVQ training process. One assessor is not qualified to assess evidence from diverse sources. A qualified assessor oversees and countersigns this assessor's judgements on diverse evidence. Internal verification is sound, with all portfolios of evidence verified regularly. Assessors are observed on a minimum of two occasions during the year and written feedback is given. The internal verifier follows through any agreed actions arising from verification.

34. Learners' portfolios contain a good range of types of evidence and are of a high standard. Although observation forms a major part of assessment, other sources are used. All portfolios include photographs of displays prepared by the learner. Learners complete personal statements and submit product evidence generated from their day-to-day work activities. Learners' knowledge is assessed by answering written questions set for each unit. Open-learning packs are also issued to each learner. Assessors spend considerable time with learners helping them to create their portfolios of evidence.

35. During a three-month period of staff changes, some learners were not assessed. For some learners, NVQ assessment was delayed for over three months. This led to opportunities for assessment being missed and caused frustration among trainees. Pelcombe Training has appointed a new assessor to carry out regular assessments.

36. There has been little assessment of trainees' key skills. One advanced modern apprentice, who started her programme over two years ago and has completed an NVQ at level 2, has not yet had any of her key skills assessed. Other trainees have completed units of their NVQs, but there has been no cross-referencing of this evidence with their key skills. Slow implementation of key skills is a major reason for trainees not achieving their qualification frameworks. Action has been taken to remedy this situation. Trainees have a good understanding of key skills. Information is made available to trainees to show how evidence generated from the NVQ can be used towards key skills. Trainees have been given credit for their

POOR PRACTICE

When visited by inspectors, a trainee was working in a busy and demanding environment with no supervision from any member of staff. The trainee was expected to serve behind the bar, take ordered meals to tables, and take bookings for tables. If there were any problems, the trainee did not have access to a supervisor.

prior achievement of key skills or of the equivalent achievement in appropriate qualifications. Assessors have attended key skills training sessions and the team now meets on a regular basis to ensure that issues related to key skills are being dealt with.

Hospitality

Grade 3

37. There are 20 trainees on the following hospitality programmes:

NVQ	Foundation modern apprentices	Advanced modern apprentices
Bar service level 2	0	4
On-licensed premises level 3	0	2
Food preparation and cooking level 2	1	2
Kitchen supervision level 3	0	1
Hospitality quick service level 2	3	2
Restaurant supervision level 3	0	5
Total	4	16

All the trainees are employed in seven catering establishments in and around Colchester. These establishments include a golf club, public houses and fast-food outlets. The training and assessment of trainees in licensed premises is subcontracted to another training organisation. All training and assessment is undertaken in the workplace. Pelcombe Training has one assessor and one internal verifier for hospitality. Both have good occupational knowledge and experience. The subcontractor also has an experienced assessor and internal verifier. There are currently no work-based assessors although one workplace supervisor is working towards an assessors' qualification. Trainees can use a range of resources, which enables them to acquire the necessary skills to complete their qualifications. Pelcombe Training also provides training materials to supplement these resources.

At the original inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ weak assessment practice
- ◆ poor understanding of training by trainees
- ◆ missed opportunities for accreditation of prior training
- ◆ slow progress on some NVQs

38. Since the original inspection, Pelcombe Training has made good progress in remedying these weaknesses. The weak assessment practice included an unqualified member of staff acting as an assessor. Qualified staff now carry out all assessments. Trainees have a good understanding of their training programmes and are aware of the progress they are making towards achieving their qualifications. Trainees' previous experience and qualifications are recognised at their induction and are taken into account when their individual training plans are created. Employers' in-house training is cross-referenced to the trainees' NVQ units, which has improved the progress and rates of achievement, particularly in the area of quick service. The self-assessment report produced before the reinspection was informative and accurate. Inspectors agreed with one strength and one weakness identified in the report. They also identified two other strengths and one further weakness. The grade awarded was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training in quick service
- ◆ well-designed individual training programmes
- ◆ good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate short-term target-setting
- ◆ poor assessment planning

39. Training for the quick service NVQ is well planned. This was recognised by the company in its self-assessment report. Trainees working towards this qualification are all employed by an internationally recognised fast-food chain. This chain has well-established and comprehensive in-house training programmes. These training programmes enable employees to gain additional qualifications in basic food hygiene, food safety and first aid. The performance of employees is closely monitored and recorded. Several trainees had been employed for some time before starting their NVQ training and had already gained significant experience. Pelcombe Training has cross-referenced this training with the NVQ qualification. This allows trainees to monitor their progress towards gaining their qualification while undertaking the in-house training. This has helped to reduce the time it takes trainees to complete their qualifications.

40. Pelcombe Training provides a sound induction for trainees into their training programmes at their place of employment. The company also carries out an initial assessment of trainees to identify any training support which they may require. Pelcombe Training provides this support. At the start of their training programme, trainees, in discussion with their assessor and workplace supervisor, identify their

job roles and responsibilities. Careful consideration is given to these roles and this forms the basis of creating a training programme. Units which trainees choose to undertake during training are carefully matched to their work tasks and roles and developed into a well-designed individual training programme. Any areas of training which have been identified and are not covered by work activities are discussed with the trainees and their supervisors so that any barriers to achievement are removed.

41. The retention rates are good and have been continuously improving. During the period 1999 - 2001, 74 per cent of trainees have stayed on their training programmes. Fourteen of the 19 advanced modern apprentices who started a training programme last year are still in the training. Of those who left, none had achieved all the targets on their individual training plans but two had completed NVQs, one at level 2 and one at level 3. Of the eight foundation modern apprentices who started last year three remain in training, three have achieved all the targets on their individual training plans and two have left without a qualification. Overall, these results are good for a sector where staff turnover is often very high.

42. Trainees' progress is closely monitored and recorded. Trainees have frequent and effective contact with their assessors. This was referred to in the self-assessment report. These meetings are at weekly or fortnightly intervals. Assessors are flexible in their approach and often meet trainees on early or late shifts. The objectives which trainees have to achieve between these meetings are not always written down. Formal progress reviews are undertaken every eight weeks. These are used to provide support for trainees. The records of these reviews contain comments from the workplace supervisors and reflect trainees' progress. Trainees receive a copy for their own reference. These progress reviews often fail to identify short-term targets for the trainee to achieve between reviews. The records do not contain sufficient detail which trainees can use as a focus for the achievement of specific objectives or goals. While Pelcombe Training has developed materials to help trainees to progress towards achieving key skills units, these have not been fully integrated with the training programmes. Targets for the completion of training programmes are contained in the trainees' individual training plans. These provide the main focus for trainees' achievement, but not all trainees are aware of when they should be achieving the targets on the plans.

43. Good use is made of naturally occurring evidence from the workplace in the assessment of trainees. Workplace supervisors are involved in the trainees' NVQs and countersign evidence to guarantee its authenticity. The planning of assessments is not comprehensive or detailed and trainees do not understand the assessment process. The form used to plan assessments does not have sufficient information about what is to be assessed and how assessment takes place. It states that trainees are required to collect evidence but does not refer to how assessments will be carried out. Assessments are, however, carried out in an appropriate way and trainees do receive good feedback on their performance from assessors. The internal verification systems used by the company and the subcontractor are sound.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

44. There are 34 trainees on programmes leading to NVQs in hairdressing. Seventeen are modern apprentices working towards level 3 and 17 are national trainees working towards level 2. Pelcombe Training became an accredited centre for hairdressing in March 1999. All trainees are employed in one of six salons. Of these six salons, four belong to a salon group which has its own training school. Pelcombe Training subcontracts off-the-job training to this salon group. All employed trainees within this group attend the training school for one day each week. The rest of the trainees are trained and assessed in the salon in which they work. There are currently 15 work-based assessors, five of whom have formal assessor qualifications. The training officer who is employed jointly by the salon group and by Pelcombe Training reviews trainees in the workplace at least every four weeks. Since it began to offer hairdressing training, Pelcombe Training has had 48 trainees start the programmes. Fourteen left the programme early and of these, two trainees left with a NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing. Some trainees have transferred to another provider of hairdressing training. No trainees to date have completed their framework. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than the one given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees have full understanding of the NVQ
- ◆ comprehensive documents to support the assessment process
- ◆ good access to a wide variety of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ lack of training opportunities for some trainees

45. Trainees fully understand the requirements of their NVQ and manage the assessment documents throughout their programme. The whole assessment process is led by trainees, both in the training school and in the workplace. Trainees know exactly how the knowledge will be covered and are issued with a set of questions for each of the units when they receive their assessment books. Trainees generate natural occurring evidence during the working day in the salon and some trainees make rapid progress with their NVQ. Some level 2 trainees who joined the programme after leaving school in the summer of 1999 have almost completed their programme.

46. Pelcombe Training has developed its own comprehensive assessment documents, which it issues to trainees approximately three months after they start the programme. Each element is split up into plastic wallets and has within it an

assessment plan, a client consultation sheet, and a client questionnaire. There is also a sheet which trainees fill in, describing the process they have undertaken along with techniques, products, tools and equipment used. Trainees are enthusiastic and achieve their targets.

47. Trainees have access to and gather a wide variety of evidence towards their NVQ. Good-quality photographic work is used, particularly at level 3, to support the assessments. These photographs are referenced clearly to the activity which they claim to be competent in. Assessors complete checklists based on the evidence put forward and through observing trainees carrying out the activity.

48. There are a large number of inexperienced assessors who have not achieved their assessor qualifications involved in signing off trainees' assessments. In one salon, trainees on their level 3 programmes sign each other's assessments. There is a qualified assessor available in three of the five salons. Some assessment decisions made by unqualified assessors are not checked by a qualified assessor. Awarding body guidelines are not always referred to, and there is some misunderstanding of how the range within the NVQ can be covered or which type of assessment should be used. Internal verification sampling is carried out but insufficient support is given to the assessors.

49. There are insufficient clients available in the training school for all trainees when they attend one day each week. Clients have to be shared among the trainees. For example, one trainee will shampoo the client for an assessment then the client will be passed to other trainees for a cut, then a blow-dry and finish. Often, when trainees are without models, they work on each other and are then assessed. This does not meet the requirement of assessment in a realistic working environment. Trainees are often left to manage their own programme in the workplace with little support. The more experienced assessors are busy with clients in the salon and have little time to support the trainees. Often the assessors in the workplace have limited knowledge themselves, particularly in areas such as key skills, to enable them to offer the necessary support. Level 3 modern apprentices are often the nominated workplace assessors and in many cases do not have assessor qualifications.

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good practice where provider staff take trainee out into the town to make purchases for the organisation. The planning and carrying out of these task helps with personal development and contributes to the trainees' portfolios and thus to the Wordpower and Numberpower qualifications

Foundation for work

Grade 2

50. Pelcombe Training offers a range of foundation for work programmes at three of its centres. In one county, a private training provider has recently been taken over by Pelcombe Training and has a small number of trainees on the programme. Across the organisation there are two New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option and four trainees on a work-based training for adults programme. This programme lasts for an average of 16 weeks and includes basic keyboarding skills and a short period of work experience and is designed mainly to improve employability. In addition there is basic employability training available. Two trainees are on this programme, which lasts for up to 28 weeks and provides a

variety of nationally recognised qualifications. Seventeen young people are following a foundation programme known locally as Next Step, which provides personal development opportunities, linked to the national record of achievement. All trainees undergo a recognised basic skills assessment and where appropriate can pursue a wordpower or numberpower qualification. The main aim of this programme is to enable trainees to progress to mainstream training. Training is carried out by suitably qualified staff at all centres. Although, at 60 per cent, the drop-out rate is high, the achievement rate in 1999-2000 in the centre which carries out most of the training is approximately 78 per cent. Pelcombe Training identified strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report which were agreed on by inspectors. Some weaknesses had been addressed successfully and the inspectors awarded a higher grade than the one given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training resources
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ good use of training centre working environment
- ◆ high achievement rates at main centre

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of planned occupational training opportunities
- ◆ few work placements in one area

51. Training is carried out in three centres, all of which have adequate and spacious accommodation, which is well lit and provides a good training environment for trainees. Staff have developed an excellent range of training materials to support both basic and key skills training. Resource packs are imaginative and relate to the right level of training for both adult and youth trainees. Trainees' portfolios of evidence for numberpower and wordpower qualifications are structured and well-organised. Effective use is made of information technology resources to allow trainees to work at their own pace to develop basic keyboard skills. In one centre adult trainees use the resources to produce signs for the training rooms and also curriculum vitae for other trainees.

52. Trainees are well supported by qualified and experienced staff. Good use is made of past trainees who are employed by Pelcombe Training and who work well with trainees. This ensures that there is a comfortable and secure environment for training. In one instance, a trainee with a lack of interpersonal skills, including the ability to mix with others, was able to work in an information technology room in such a way as to provide easy exit from the room. At the same time staff were able to monitor the trainees' without appearing overprotective. Some staff have a counselling qualification and two have a mentoring qualification.

53. Pelcombe Training makes effective use of the working environment in the training centres. For example, trainees are able to work on reception duties

including switchboard operations. Trainees are also encouraged to use the internal computerised network to develop their information technology communications skills. This facility is provided for trainees on a regular basis with rotas drawn up to ensure that all trainees have the opportunity to participate. Trainees are encouraged to support each other and, on occasions, trainees work in pairs to provide mutual support.

54. Trainees' progress through NVQs and wordpower/numberpower qualifications is monitored centrally at each centre and good visual records shown on a master progress sheet ensure that trainees and staff are aware of targets. This monitoring system also records trainees' reviews, which also ensures that reviews are not missed. Trainees attend regularly and are punctual for training sessions. Sessions are both lively and stimulating. Job preparation skills such as interviewing techniques are given a high priority. The other centres have only recently started the programme and so trainees have not yet achieved their qualifications.

55. Although there is a great deal of support for trainees' personal development there are few planned occupational training opportunities. Most trainees enter the programme with a desire to follow a range of vocational options into employment. Some enter the programme with previous practical workskills and experience and are placed on the information technology route to develop basic keyboard skills and become used to attendance and punctuality patterns. Occupational training is given later in the programme for those trainees. Pelcombe Training has recognised this weakness and has action plans to address the issue. In one centre, work placements are difficult to arrange and trainees do not benefit from work experience opportunities. There is a low rate of progression into employment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

56. Pelcombe Training has a clearly written equal opportunities policy which meets legislative and TEC requirements. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the projects manager. Data are collected for the purposes of these contracts and this includes trainees' achievements as well as information relating to gender, age, disability and ethnicity. All trainees are given a copy of the trainees' handbook at induction and this states the company's commitment to providing equal opportunities and to investigating complaints and grievances fully. There is a gender balance among the company's staff, with 53 per cent men and 47 per cent women. There is one employee from a minority ethnic group. The number of trainees from minority ethnic groups reflects the proportion in the local community i.e. in the period 1996-99 there were 54 trainees from minority ethnic groups, on average of 1.5 per cent. In the same period, 9 per cent of trainees described themselves as having a disability. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and identified additional

strengths. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than the one given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous implementation of equal opportunities policy and procedures
- ◆ good staff recruitment practices
- ◆ effective complaints procedures
- ◆ comprehensive staff training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some promotional materials lack reference to equal opportunities
- ◆ no analysis of data on unsuccessful applicants

57. Pelcombe Training is highly self-critical and constructive about its role in promoting equal opportunities. The company has recognised the importance of ensuring that, not only does it comply with legal equal opportunities requirements, but that it should move beyond and identify issues and actively promote them. It has a comprehensive policy setting out its commitment to equality of opportunity. Employers also show good support for equal opportunities. There is clear action planning for a phased introduction of new activities to support equality of opportunity.

58. Pelcombe Training has a simple and reliable recruitment process which is fair and open. It follows a logical sequence, with each stage building on the previous one to ensure a consistent approach. Applicants with disabilities are able to apply over the telephone or in other non-standard ways. All applicants are informed of the result and feedback is provided where requested to unsuccessful applicants. Detailed guidance is provided to all those involved in recruitment and selection. The recruitment and selection procedures and practices throughout the organisation are reviewed annually to ensure that no group is disadvantaged either directly or indirectly.

59. The organisation actively promotes the rights and responsibilities of its employees and trainees. All staff and trainees receive a copy of the summary of the equal opportunities policy and a copy of the written guidance on how to make a complaint is contained in the staff and trainees' handbook. Complaints of discrimination or harassment are treated seriously and are fully investigated with confidentiality and sensitivity.

60. Equal opportunities training was originally addressed on an unplanned basis, with the occasional member of staff attending TEC-organised events as and when they were available. A nominated member of staff now has the role and responsibility to ensure that good practice in equal opportunities is shared with all staff. 'Cultural awareness training' has recently been offered to all members of

staff including mini-bus drivers, canteen assistants and representatives from partner companies. Nearly all staff attended. Training managers have attended equal opportunities training from the Engineering Employers Federation. Some staff have also attended drugs awareness and race awareness training sessions provided by the TEC.

61. Some promotional materials for national traineeships and modern apprenticeships do not include any reference to equal opportunities. An action plan is being implemented which includes redrafting of all promotional materials and advertising to include reference to equal opportunities. A recent advertisement by Pelcombe Training in the local newspaper clearly states that the organisation is an equal opportunities employer.

62. The company does not analyse why trainees of one gender or from any particular ethnic group may have a better record in terms of retention rates or the achievement of qualifications or employment. Many potential trainees for Pelcombe Training's programmes do not turn up for interviews, even though transport is offered. Pelcombe Training does not analyse why people do not take up the offer of interview for training.

Trainee support

Grade 2

63. Trainees are recruited onto programmes at Pelcombe Training through the careers service, job centres, employers and by personal recommendation. All trainees are offered an individual interview, where an interview record is completed and, in some cases, trainees are given an initial assessment to determine any literacy and numeracy support needs. Later in their programme trainees undertake initial assessments in key skills. Occupational skills testing is also used effectively in some areas. There are job-search sessions provided by the organisation. Employed trainees are referred directly to the training officer responsible for the occupational area who monitors their progress and looks after their general welfare. There is a four-day formal induction for in-house trainees, which includes health and safety training. All trainees receive a handbook. Reviews are carried out by training staff and regular contact is kept with trainees awaiting work placements. The self-assessment report identified strengths which were agreed on by inspectors. One weakness detailed in the report was also agreed on and a higher grade was awarded than that given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive induction for in-house trainees
- ◆ strong community links
- ◆ good support from employers
- ◆ good support for trainees with training difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic accreditation of prior training
- ◆ some workplace induction lacks rigour

GOOD PRACTICE

An example of good practice is where the organisation provides bus transport for trainees in rural areas. The majority of this cost is met by the provider's own resources and is available free of charge to trainees.

64. Non-employed trainees who join the programme are given a comprehensive induction. The induction is thorough and generally lasts for a period of four days. The programme is carried out at both of the main centres and includes an initial assessment of trainees' basic and key skills. Trainees are issued with a comprehensive handbook which explains all of their rights and responsibilities. The induction also includes awareness training in health and safety, equal opportunities and specialist topics such as manual handling for some trainees. During the induction, trainees have the opportunity to gain a health and safety certificate. In the final stages of the induction, trainees' occupational preference is discussed and training plans are completed detailing the NVQ and training arrangements.

65. Pelcombe Training has strong and long-standing community links with schools and employers as well as community organisations. It is well known for the support it offers trainees within a wide variety of areas of the community. There are many initiatives being implemented within the local school. A mentoring scheme is in operation in one school whereby Pelcombe Training's staff visit the school and hold a surgery where year-11 pupils can drop in to ask for guidance on their career options. A scheme is operated in one centre called 'Save and Pave' where year-11 pupils attend the carpentry and joinery section for two days a week. They do woodworking and can achieve a vocational award. 'Solar Panels' is a programme where Pelcombe Training's engineering tutors go into the local secondary school and work on a project with them building a solar panel which drives a fan.

66. Pelcombe Training has strong links with local employers. It has an open-access policy where employers can come in and interview prospective trainees. Pelcombe Training's premises are attractive and well kept and provide a professional shop-front image. The careers service pays regular visits to the premises and Pelcombe Training's staff visit careers offices to carry out interviews. Staff also serve on the committee of a local sheltered housing accommodation organisation and some are also inaugural members of a local 'social inclusion' partnership.

67. Special equipment is provided for trainees who may be partially sighted or have impaired hearing. Adjustments have also been made for trainees who have back problems, using special chairs with lumbar support. Pelcombe Training has an early intervention scheme where parents are consulted if problems arise. They provide support to trainees in many ways. Trainees are transported in private cars to and from interviews. If trainees leave due to a lack of entitlement, Pelcombe Training continues to provide training to allow them to complete their NVQ. A

psychological assessment has been arranged for a trainee who has lost a limb in an accident to ensure that the trainee would be able to cope with occupational training.

68. Accreditation of prior achievement is not systematically carried out across all occupational areas. Trainees who have achieved NVQs in the past have not had this added to their individual training plans. Assessments have been duplicated, as trainees have retaken assessments that they have already achieved. There are no standard recording systems to ensure that trainees' prior experiences are formally recognised and accredited. Pelcombe Training's staff are often not aware of how to deal with certificates brought forward from previous achievements. Induction in the workplace varies from good to weak. This is dependent on the organisation that trainees are placed in and on the personnel dealing with the induction. Induction is often not reinforced and some trainees have little recall of the induction content.

Management of training

Grade 2

69. The training director has overall responsibility for training taking place at two main centres and two smaller sites across three counties. Pelcombe Training's head office is in Colchester. The training director is directly responsible to the managing director and oversees a team of six managers. Two of these managers have a responsibility for the occupational programmes, one for the recruitment and placement of trainees and the running of a centre on a day-to-day basis. One manages special projects and professional training courses, another deals with claims and contract compliance, and one has the responsibility for managing another of the smaller centres. Staff numbers have more than doubled in the last two years and now stand at 134, with 41 of these being directly associated with the training arm of the company. The majority are centre based with small number's role spanning the centres. The board of directors meets on a monthly basis and the training director reports on the activities of the training centres. The management team meets informally on a weekly basis and formally on a monthly basis.

70. Pelcombe Training works in partnership with two companies, a group of hair salons and one company which offers training leading to NVQs in machine printing. It also subcontracts the training in on-licensed premises. In all three cases, Pelcombe Training is responsible for the management of training. The self-assessment report included strengths which were no more than normal practice. A further strength was identified by inspectors. The weaknesses noted included two that were specific to occupational areas, and three that have been addressed by the action plan in this area. Two further weaknesses were identified and a higher grade awarded than that given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good management of key skills training

- ◆ good opportunities for staff development
- ◆ good co-operative relationships with external organisations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some ineffective management of subcontractors

71. Key skills are integrated into many of the training programmes. Assessment is well planned and staff play a key role in supporting trainees with the collection of evidence and development of portfolios. Trainees receive a good introduction into key skills and, in many cases, employers play an active role in providing a range of opportunities for trainees to develop their key skills.

72. The first appraisal of a new member of staff takes place three to six months after their start date. Further appraisals held on an annual basis. During appraisal the majority of staff development requirements are identified and acted upon. Opportunities for development are plentiful and not always directed to occupational needs. Pelcombe Training has plans to formalise and focus training. Examples of good staff development include a tutor winning an Essex TEC '20/20 Vision Award' and a staff member being sent on a professional centre management development programme. Six staff have recently completed key skills training and two staff have attended a teacher training course, with three completing last year. Most of the staff have recently attended 'cultural awareness' training.

73. Pelcombe Training has good co-operative relationships with external organisations. Pelcombe Training has a sound business-planning practice in operation based on the collection and use of accurate and relevant data. Targets are set based on performance and are monitored at all levels of the organisation.

74. Pelcombe Training has made some progress with monitoring the provision off-the-job training. This particularly applies to the hairdressing and hospitality external subcontractors where agreements have been developed in an attempt to manage the programme more effectively. This arrangement is in its infancy and does not yet extend to the colleges of further education with which the organisation contracts.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

75. Pelcombe Training has a clear and easy-to-understand quality assurance policy and procedures. It has also achieved the ISO 9001 quality assurance standard. There are copies of the policy in all training centres. Quality assurance systems are the responsibility of the finance and quality assurance director. The system is regularly reviewed and updated and these updates are communicated to all members of staff. Staff attend regular team meetings which are recorded and action points produced. The training director sets targets for NVQ achievement and retention with team managers. Performance of staff is then measured against these targets. There is an effective complaints procedure. Trainees are made aware of this procedure during their in-house induction and further details are contained in the trainees' handbook.

76. The self-assessment report is clear and easy to understand. It provides an accurate picture of the organisation for each occupational area with clearly defined strengths and weaknesses. There are clear descriptions for each occupational areas, concise bullet points illustrating strengths and weaknesses and many of the areas highlighted for improvement have already been addressed. The self-assessment report identified several strengths which were considered to be no more than normal practice. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as the one given by Pelcombe Training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good staff involvement in projects to promote continuous improvement
- ◆ effective system for evaluating performance
- ◆ comprehensive and accurate self-assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ internal verification system lacks rigour in some occupational areas
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ lack of monitoring of the quality of training

77. All the staff in Pelcombe Training have a good understanding of the quality assurance arrangements and are positive and proactive about improving the overall training experience for their trainees. Quality assurance is discussed at the monthly team meetings and action points are produced as part of the minutes, meaning that good practice is shared. Most of the staff were involved in the self-assessment process and have a clear understanding of their programmes' strengths and weaknesses and of the action plans which have been produced to address the problem areas. Many of the action points have already produced positive results within the organisation.

78. Pelcombe Training has recently introduced a formal procedure involving a series of questionnaires for monitoring trainees and employers' satisfaction with the programmes. It has plans to further evaluate this feedback to provide action points to improve standards within the organisation. The questionnaires are issued when trainees complete or leave their programmes, partway through the programme and to employers. The results of these surveys are evaluated and improvements are introduced. These include a re-designed monthly progress review, improved induction for employed trainees and a re-structuring of the delivery of the CLAIT qualification. Pelcombe Training also seeks the views of its subcontractors, to ensure that the training is effective and that they are meeting the contractual requirements of the training programme.

79. The internal verification system lacks rigour in some occupational areas. There is a clear internal verification policy, but it is not adhered to in all areas, and Pelcombe Training has failed to pick up inconsistencies in assessment practice. There is insufficient sampling of portfolios, no sampling plan, no observation of assessments and portfolios are only verified on completion of the qualification in some occupational areas. On the hairdressing programme, there is no formal internal verification planning, little support for assessors and little portfolio sampling. There are systems for monitoring trainees' progress, however, in practice, they are not always fully implemented in all occupational areas.

80. Pelcombe Training does not monitor the quality of training across all centres and occupational areas. There are many examples of excellent practice on a number of programmes. However, this good practice is not always shared and there is no standardisation of the quality of training. On the hair programme, for example, standards vary across the six salons and there is no system to make sure that the overall quality of training and assessment is the same in all salons.