

INSPECTION REPORT

Fareport Training Organisation Ltd

29 May 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 *learnirect* 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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Fareport Training Organisation Ltd is based in Fareham, Hampshire. It provides work-based training for disadvantaged young people in business administration, retailing and customer services and health, care and public service. Many young people on the training programme in Life Skills progress to regular employment. The company carries out all of its training in-house at its two training centres in Fareham and Gosport.

Overall judgement

Work-based training for young people in business administration, health, care and public services and foundation for work is satisfactory but in retailing and customer services it is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of Fareport Training Organisation Ltd are also unsatisfactory. The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based training is satisfactory in foundation for work, business administration and health, care and public services but unsatisfactory in retailing and customer services. Key skills training is poor. Work placements are good. There are good links with other organisations. Trainees do not receive enough assessment in the workplace. Off-the-job training is good. There are good resources at both training centres. Retention and achievement rates are poor.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Target-setting is poor. Data on trainees' performance are not taken into account in decision-making by managers. Many employers are unaware of the training needs of trainees. Employers do not help trainees gather appropriate evidence of their competence in the workplace. Action-planning following self-assessment is poor. There is insufficient promotion of training to groups under-represented on programmes. The quality assurance system is inadequate. It does not enable management to identify weaknesses in training effectively.

GRADES

Business administration	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Retailing & customer service	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Health, care & public service	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Foundation for work	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- frequent visits from assessors to trainees to boost their confidence
- good work placements
- good off-the-job training facilities
- good internal communication

KEY WEAKNESSES

- no assessment in the workplace
- poor retention and achievement rates in some occupational areas
- lack of data analysis to inform management decisions
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- little understanding of training programmes among employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective self-assessment
- establishment of links between staff appraisal and individual staff development plans
- more effective integration of key skills training with vocational training
- better structured off-the-job training sessions

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Fairport Training Organisation Ltd (FTO Ltd) was established in 1981. It provides training for disadvantaged and less able young people. The company has been privately owned since 1986. There are two training centres in Fareham and Gosport. A team of 20 full-time staff, and the managing director, provide training for 186 trainees. There are 83 foundation modern apprentices, 50 advanced modern apprentices, 41 young people on a Life Skills training programme and 12 trainees on other training programmes. Work-based training for young people is offered in business administration, retailing & customer service, early years and care for the elderly. Training for young people aged 16 to 25 is funded through a contract with the Hampshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. Fareham is an affluent urban area with many small and medium-sized businesses. The town of Gosport has one major road serving the area, poor public transport facilities and a ferryboat service to Portsmouth. There have been large naval and Ministry of Defence establishments in the area. The running down of these establishments, and the closure of several large manufacturing companies, have caused social and economic deprivation in the area. The unemployment rate in Fareham is 1.1 per cent and in Gosport, it is 2.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent. However, the unemployment rate is as high as 9 per cent in some areas of Gosport. Youth unemployment accounts for 30 per cent of unemployment in these areas. Minority ethnic communities constitute 0.7 per cent of the population in Fareham, compared with 2.2 per cent in Portsmouth. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in the area achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 50.7 per cent, above the national average of 49.2 per cent. In four schools in the area, the proportion of school leavers obtaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, were well below the national average.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days at FTO Ltd during May 2001. They interviewed 23 trainees during training sessions and visited 34 trainees at their workplace. Inspectors visited 31 employers and interviewed 17 workplace supervisors. They interviewed all the company's training staff at both training centres. Inspectors looked at trainees' portfolios, training programmes, trainees' files, company documents and policies, minutes of meetings, the quality assurance policy and written procedures, data on monitoring of trainees, correspondence, and internal and external verifiers' reports. FTO Ltd produced its first self-assessment report in May 2000. Inspectors were given the second self-assessment report, produced in February 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Retailing & customer service	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Health, care & public service	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Foundation for work	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	5
Total	0	2	4	3	0	0	0	9

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	44	3

4. FTO provides training leading to NVQs in business administration at levels 1 to 4 and in information technology and accounting at level 2. There are 44 trainees. Of these, 17 are advanced modern apprentices, 23 are foundation modern apprentices and four are on other work-based training programmes. Additional training is available in keyboard skills, first aid, information technology and accounting. Assessors visit trainees every two weeks to carry out progress reviews. One member of FTO staff is a qualified internal verifier. The company recruits the trainees. Applicants are interviewed and take a series of tests, including a self-assessment test. Some apprentices are referred directly to FTO and they are not tested. Trainees attend a half-day induction which covers health and safety, details of the NVO and equal opportunities. All modern apprentices begin their training at NVQ level 2. Most trainees attend off-the-job training once a fortnight at one of the two training centres. Inspectors agreed with the judgements and grading in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people								
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started			1		29		39
Still in training			0	0	0	0	23	59
FMA framework completed			1	100	18	62	5	13
NVQ level 2 completed			1	100	25	86	13	33

Work-based learning for young people								
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started	5		2		12		25
Still in training	0	0	0	0	2	17	17	68
AMA framework completed	1	20	0	0	6	50	2	8
NVQ level 2 completed	3	60	1	50	1	8	3	12
NVQ level 3 completed	4	80	1	50	7	58	2	8

NVQ Training								
NVQ Training								
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started	29		32		11		5	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	80
Individual learning plan completed	8	28	17	53	8	73	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	21	72	15	47	5	45	1	20
NVQ level 1 completed	6	21	16	50	7	64	1	20
NVQ level 2 completed	4	14	3	9	4	36	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- good action-planning and target-setting
- thorough reviews of trainees' progress

WEAKNESSES

- no assessment in the workplace
- weak internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer structure for off-the-job training sessions
- closer links with employers
- higher achievement and retention rates

5. The assessors make visits to trainees in the workplace once every two weeks. During these visits, assessors carry out reviews of trainees' progress and provide extra training when required. They agree an action plan with the trainees, which specifies what the trainees have to do before the assessor visits again. Assessors provide monthly reports on trainees' progress. A comprehensive summary of these reports is drawn up at regular intervals and this enables trainees to identify what they need to do to achieve their qualification.

6. In most work placements, trainees undertake a wide range of tasks and are able to develop the competences they need in order to obtain their NVQ. One apprentice is working towards an NVQ at level 4 and is the buyer for a company selling electronic components. Her role includes buying-in parts and selling them on as well as

undertaking other line-management responsibilities. Another works in a hospital and is responsible for a clinic where she developed and maintains the database on patients, doctors and clinicians. In a further instance, an apprentice working at the local police headquarters is responsible for clerical administration in a magistrates' court including ensuring all witnesses and legal specialists are informed of court proceedings. Resources at placements are good. Many trainees have access to the Internet.

7. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. Of the 29 foundation modern apprentices who started training during 1999-2000, four left without a qualification. Of the 39 who started training during 2000-01, 13 have achieved their NVQ at level 2 and five have already completed the framework. Of the five advanced modern apprentices who started training during 1997-98, three have completed the framework and one has left without any qualification. Of the 12 advanced modern apprentices who started training during 1999-2000, seven have gained an NVQ at level 3 and six have completed the framework. Of the 25 advanced modern apprentices who started their training during 2000-01, two have completed the framework and 17 are still in training.

8. Internal verification is weak. The internal verifier keeps records of every trainee. A computer system gives details of who has been assessed and by whom. There is no assessment plan. One assessor is responsible for 27 trainees and is working towards assessor qualifications. Trainees who collect all evidence of their competences in the workplace do not have this evidence verified until they have completed an NVQ unit. Some trainees have been held back by having to wait for verification to take place. In many portfolios, the range of evidence is narrow. Some trainees fail to cross-reference their evidence to different NVQ units. The portfolios contain few witness testimonies signed by workplace supervisors. In some instances, the trainees gather a disproportionate amount of evidence through assignments rather than everyday tasks in the workplace.

Good Practice

Assessors carry laptop computers for use with trainees who cannot attend the training centres. One assessor spent two hours showing a trainee how to use a spreadsheet software package. The trainee was able to practise on the laptop and the assessor was able to provide immediate feedback on the trainees' progress and performance.

Retailing & customer service**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	31	4

9. The company offers training in retailing and customer service leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3, distributive operations leading to an NVQ at level 1, and warehouse and distribution leading to an NVQ at level 2. There are currently 31 trainees. Twenty-three are following a foundation modern apprenticeship and four are advanced modern apprentices. One trainee is working towards an NVQ at level 2 and three are working towards an NVQ at level 1. Trainees may join the programme at any time. There are 21 retailing and customer service trainees, three distributive operations trainees, six customer service trainees, and one warehousing trainee. Twenty-eight trainees are employed and three are on work placement and are paid a training allowance. Most training is carried out at the workplace. Some trainees visit the training centre in Fareport for additional training. There are five occupationally qualified assessors. Two of these assessors are working to obtain assessor qualifications and a third assessor is monitoring their progress. The fourth team member is the internal verifier. A fifth team member will take over the internal verifier's duties. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They found other weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given by the company.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people								
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started	4		4		12		37
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	62
FMA framework completed	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	0	0	1	8	2	5

Work-based learning for young people								
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)								
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started			12		14		6	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	4	67
AMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			7	58	6	43	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0

NVQ Training								
NVQ Training								
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started	16		23		7		6	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	67
Individual learning plan completed	7	44	7	30	4	57	1	17
Left without completing individual learning plan	9	56	15	65	3	43	1	17
NVQ level 1 completed	1	6	2	9	4	57	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	4	25	5	22	1	14	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good arrangements for the continuous assessments of trainees
- frequent visits from assessors to trainees in the workplace
- careful selection of work placements to meet trainees' needs

WEAKNESSES

- failure to provide key skills training from the outset of programmes
- narrow range of assessment methods
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning
- better understanding by employers of the NVQ process and trainees' needs
- clearer aims and objectives for trainees

10. Trainees are encouraged to develop their skills through use of the appropriate

equipment available in work placements. Good resources are readily available to trainees and fully meet the requirements of the awarding body. Many trainees have progressed from Life Skills programmes but some have low self-esteem or lack self-confidence. Trainees feel valued and appreciate the support they receive from their assessors. Most employers are very supportive of the training process and the trainees. Assessors visit trainees in the workplace at least once every fortnight. They observe trainees and make detailed assessments of their performance. Assessors leave trainees with a detailed specification of the work on which they will be assessed at the next visit. The trainees are encouraged to contact their assessor between visits if they have any problems. Assessors also carry out a helpful pastoral role by mentoring and encouraging their trainees. Specialist staff make visits to the workplace to help trainees whose basic skills are weak. Assignments involving the use of basic skills have a vocational context and enable trainees to collect evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences. The assessment process is continuous. Evidence of trainees' competences is entered on evidence grids as soon as it is obtained. Trainees know how much progress they have made towards achieving their qualification and can readily identify the evidence they still need to obtain.

11. Achievement and retention rates are poor. In the last three years, none of the 32 advanced modern apprentices has achieved an NVQ at level 3. Thirteen trainees have achieved their NVQ at level 2. Recruitment to the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme has increased during the last three years. Of the 37 apprentices recruited since April 2000, 23 are still on their programme. Since 1998, 36 trainees have enrolled on other work-based training programmes. Nineteen trainees left early, six have achieved their NVQ at level 1 and six have achieved their NVQ at level 2. Nineteen apprentices have completed their apprenticeship framework.

12. There is a narrow range of assessment methods. Assessors do not collect enough evidence from the workplace of trainees' acquisition of skills. Some employers provide their trainees with work through which they can be assessed for the NVQ but assessors do not focus on this. Key skills are assessed separately and not as an integral part of the overall assessment process. Some trainees have not yet started collecting evidence of their acquisition of key skills. One trainee, who created a new curriculum vitae during information technology sessions, has not had this work assessed as evidence of competency in key skills.

13. Some trainees have their previous achievements and experience, including their work on the company's Life Skills programme, taken into account in their individual training plans. Accreditation of prior learning and experience is not carried out systematically for all trainees. Although some employers are committed to helping the trainees obtain their NVQ and are involved in their training, others have little or no knowledge about NVQs and take no part in the training process. Some employers do not allow trainees enough time to complete their assignments. Some trainees who have supervisory positions are working towards an NVQ at too low a level, which does not cover the competences they need for their job.

Poor Practice

A training session for two trainees which took place in an employer's training room was subject to constant interruptions. The two trainees had to take 10 telephone calls during the training session.

Health, care & public service**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	68	3

14. Work-based health care and public service training is provided for trainees who work in residential homes, nursing homes, day nurseries and nursery schools in the Fareham and Gosport area. Two occupationally qualified work-based assessors are led by an adviser who is also the internal verifier. There are 68 trainees on the training programme. On the elderly care training programme, there are 15 advanced modern apprentices, 25 foundation modern apprentices, one trainee working towards an NVQ at level 4 and two other trainees. On the early years training programmes, there are 12 advanced modern apprentices, 12 foundation modern apprentices and one other trainee working towards an NVQ at level 2. Inspectors agreed with the grading in the self-assessment report but found strengths and weaknesses the company had not identified.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people								
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started					6		43
Still in training					0	0	37	86
FMA framework completed					1	17	2	5
NVQ level 2 completed					3	50	2	5

Work-based learning for young people								
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started	34		7		21		21
Still in training	0	0	1	14	9	43	17	81
AMA framework completed	3	9	1	14	3	14	1	5
NVQ level 2 completed	3	9	1	14	7	33	2	10
NVQ level 3 completed	9	26	1	14	4	19	1	5

NVO Training								
NVO Training								
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started	12		14		12		4	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	100
Individual learning plan completed	1	8	6	43	7	58	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	11	92	8	57	5	42	0	0
NVO level 1 completed	0	0	3	21	3	25	0	0
NVO level 2 completed	1	8	4	29	2	17	0	0

STRENGTHS

- flexible approach of assessors when arranging visits to assess trainees
- effective reviews of trainees' progress
- good additional training for trainees in elderly care
- good training facilities in workplaces

WEAKNESSES

- narrow scope of workplace assessment for early years advanced modern apprentices
- narrow range of work experience for early years trainees
- slow progress of some trainees in fully carrying out their training plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more support from some employers for early years trainees

15. Off-the-job training is good and takes place in a well-resourced training room equipped with up-to-date care textbooks, journals and computers to help trainees develop the key skill of using information technology. Trainees are able to word-process their assignments. Most trainees' portfolios of evidence are maintained well. They contain appropriate witness testimonies and diverse evidence. Assessors have produced handbooks to help the trainees to complete NVO units and work at their own pace. Care assessors are occupationally experienced and those for elderly care have a good understanding of the standards which trainees must attain. A recently appointed early years assessor is being helped by an experienced assessor and is working towards achieving her assessor qualifications.

16. Assessors from the company plan and provide off-the-job training for elderly care trainees. If trainees cannot be released for off-the-job training, then this training takes place on the employers' premises and is made available to other staff in the workplace. Most trainees receive relevant training in manual handling, health and safety and first aid. Those who need information technology key skills have access to laptop computers, owned by Fareport training centre. These computers are available for trainees to use at work and at home.

17. All trainees have progress reviews. Most employers are fully involved in trainees' progress reviews in the workplace. They agree appropriate targets and action plans for the trainees. Records of the progress review are given to trainees and employers. Trainees are aware of the extent of their progress and are able to discuss personal or work-related issues with the assessor which they believe might affect their progress.

18. Care assessors are highly committed to helping trainees progress. For example, some assessors will visit trainees early in the morning or at weekends to make the best use of opportunities to assess them. They visit trainees at least once a fortnight and in some instances, every week. The evidence in the trainees' portfolios showed that trainees were making good progress.

19. The proportion of advanced modern apprentices who complete their framework is small. Of the seven who began training in 1998-99, only one completed the framework and one is still in training. Of those who began training in 1999-2000, 14 per cent have completed the framework and 23 per cent left their programme early. The retention rate of those recruited since April 2000, however, is high at 86 per cent. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices are improving. Of those apprentices who began training since April 2000, 86 per cent are still on their programme. The retention rate for trainees on other work-based training programmes has improved. The number of trainees on these programmes, however, has declined.

20. There was a delay in appointing an assessor and some trainees did not receive any assessment in the workplace for three months. These trainees made slow progress in carrying out their training plans in full. Most of the nurseries where trainees have work placements, cater for children aged four and below. Trainees in these placements have a narrow range of work experience. Early years advanced modern apprentices do not have experience across the full age range and the scope of their assessment in the workplace is extremely limited. Some employers do not allow trainees to carry out activities of a supervisory nature, and these trainees have difficulty completing some units of the qualification. Some employed early years advanced modern apprenticeships are unable to attend off-the job training, and miss some key skills activities.

Foundation for work**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	41	3

21. The Life Skills programme helps 16 to 18 year olds to progress into work-based training, further education, or work. It lasts for 24 weeks and can be extended if necessary. Many trainees have not done well at school and are undecided in their choice of career. Some trainees have severe personal problems. For example, they have been excluded from school, or have been involved in drug abuse, or have a criminal record. Trainees are referred to the company by the careers service. Training takes place at the provider's two training centres in Fareham and Gosport and, where appropriate, in work placements. There are 41 young people on training programmes at the two training centres. Trainees can join the training programme at any time throughout the year. The programme includes training in basic and key skills, personal and social development, confidence building, jobsearch and work experience. The current training programme began in April 2001. There are four full-time training staff and two basic and key skill co-ordinators who help individual trainees. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

The table below shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

NVQ Training								
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started			123		148		176
Still in training			0	0	0	0	41	23
Individual learning plan completed			24	20	50	34	71	40
Left without completing individual learning plan			0	0	98	66	64	36

STRENGTHS

- good additional training
- good jobsearch training
- particularly well-taught training sessions

WEAKNESSES

- some poor initial assessment practices
- insufficient help for trainees with weak basic skills

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- full implementation of training plans by more trainees
- better preparation of trainees for work experience
- more effective sharing of good practice among staff

22. Training sessions are planned and taught well and cover a comprehensive range of activities to meet trainees' needs. Although some sessions are long, trainers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods to maintain trainees' interest. In one session, trainees produced a teen magazine. The group appointed an editor responsible for distributing the workload and meeting deadlines. Trainees were able to choose topics to write about. They used computers, including graphics, in their work. Many training sessions have a clear vocational content, relevant to the needs and interests of the trainees. Resources are good. There have been team meetings to share good practice.

23. Jobsearch training is an integral part of the training programme. Trainees use computer programmes to help them to identify their own career interests. Obtaining work placements is a priority for the training staff and trainees. All trainees produce a curriculum vitae, write letters to potential employers and carry out practice interviews. There are currently 14 trainees on work placements. One has gained a full-time job with training through a work placement. Work experience lasting for two days is also organised. Some trainees, however, do not understand what the placement entails and only attend on the first day. Company staff have good working relationships with officers of the local careers service who make regular visits to trainees and tutors to discuss the trainees' progress.

24. Good additional training is available for trainees, including vocational tasters in business, care and retailing outlets. Training sessions are taught well. Trainees become competent in key skills, administration, retailing and information technology. Additional in-house training courses cover confidence building, health and safety and first aid. Trainees who complete these courses receive certificates. Visiting speakers to the training centres cover such topics as careers guidance, drug and alcohol abuse and parenting.

25. Retention and achievement rates have shown a steady improvement over the last three years. Trainees' achievement on this programme is defined, not necessarily by the acquisition of qualifications, but by success in gaining a job, and progression to vocational training programmes or a college course. In 1998-99, the proportion of

trainees who carried out their training plans in full was only 20 per cent, but in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, this proportion increased to 34 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively. In 1999-2000, the proportion of trainees who left their programme early was 40 per cent and in 2000-01, this proportion has fallen to 29 per cent.

26. Sixteen trainees on this programme receive help with basic skills. Fourteen trainees on vocational programmes receive similar help. A member of staff is responsible for helping trainees to improve their basic skills. Individual trainees receive good help from this member of staff during 45-minute sessions held once a week. These sessions are well organised and carefully planned to meet trainees' needs. Trainees, however, do not receive any help with basic skills during other training sessions. Trainees' work is marked thoroughly but staff make little attempt to show trainees how to avoid making the same errors again.

27. The company uses several methods of initial assessment. There is no overall systematic procedure for initial assessment. Some assessment methods are only used in one particular centre. In some instances, trainees have taken initial tests, but over a month has elapsed before their performance in these has been marked. Initial assessment results are not always taken into account when drawing up trainees' training plans. Some trainees do not understand why they have undergone initial assessment or what they have to do to improve their performance. Trainees engage in self-assessment as an integral part of the training programme. Staff hold little discussion with trainees about the validity of the judgements they make about themselves.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 4**

28. FTO is a privately owned company. It has one training centre in Fareham and another in Gosport. The managing director, who is also the owner, is supported by a general manager, a learning and development manager and a financial administrator. There are four team leaders who act as advisors to 10 training advisers. There are also two administrators and a recruitment officer. Training advisers each look after up to 30 trainees. The company has an equal opportunities policy. The company was re-accredited as an Investor in People in March 2000. A quality assurance system is being developed. The first self-assessment report was produced in May 2000. The second self-assessment report was produced in February 2001. An action plan was included in the report. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the grading of equal opportunities but awarded a lower grade for quality assurance than that awarded by the company.

STRENGTHS

- prompt action on complaints
- effective measures to recruit disaffected and disadvantaged young people
- good off-the-job training facilities
- good staff development programme
- good internal communication

WEAKNESSES

- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- no well-established and proven quality assurance system
- insufficient checking of trainees' understanding of equal opportunities
- no analysis of equality of opportunity data
- poor use of data
- little understanding of training programme among most employers
- insufficient monitoring of action to achieve targets

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more analysis of data on retention and achievements of trainees
- more evaluation in self-assessment report
- updating of equal opportunities policy to cover current legislation
- more systematic arrangements for mentoring new staff
- establishment of links between staff appraisal and individual staff development plans
- more sharing of good practice among occupational teams

29. Internal communication is good. There are regular staff meetings during which staff are informed about staff and contract changes, reports from funding bodies and quality assurance issues. Occupational Team meetings of staff in specific occupational areas are well planned. They have a comprehensive, standard agenda. There is discussion about similar issues. Feedback from trainees and employers is discussed at these meetings. Staff share good practice but do so incidentally rather than systematically. Staff at each training centre are kept up to date with current developments by letter and memos and they have access to relevant journals. There are good links with external organisations such as the career service, schools and other training providers.

30. Staff development is good. Most staff are working towards, or have recently achieved, various qualifications such as assessor qualifications and teaching certificates. Staff training needs are identified during annual appraisals but these are seldom reflected in individual staff development plans. Staff work towards assessor qualifications in-house and towards most other qualifications through distance learning. The induction programme for new staff is good. A mentor is provided for new staff members following the induction. This mentoring system is not always effective and is being reviewed by managers.

31. Off-the-job training facilities at both training centres are good. Training materials are good. There are good computer facilities in the training rooms and laptop computers are also available to both staff and trainees. The Gosport training centre also has a wall display of trainee's achievements.

32. All staff are involved in producing the self-assessment report and the organisation's business plan. Action plans are written to rectify weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Target-setting in the action plans is poor. Progress towards reaching targets is not monitored. Retention and achievement rates are not taken into account when making management decisions.

33. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Training which occurs only in the workplace, is not planned properly. Co-ordinated action is not always taken to ensure trainees receive all the training specified in their individual training plans. Employers are given little information about the NVQ process and key skills training. Trainees do not receive enough assessment in the workplace. Some employers are reluctant to release trainees to attend off-the-job training during the working day or for progress reviews to take place at work. There are no arrangements to cover staff absence.

34. Data are taken into account when making management decisions. There is little analysis of data on trainees' recruitment, achievements and progression to further training or employment. Retention and achievement rates are not monitored systematically. There is no systematic analysis of data on staff performance.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

35. The company has an open access policy and co-operates with local authorities to encourage young people who have been excluded from school to take up work-based training. It participates in the education-business partnership by providing training for those who did not complete their secondary education. Staff work closely with the local careers service to promote work-based training to all young people and recruit those with learning difficulties.

36. The equal opportunities policy states the company's values clearly and sets out the company's aim to offer training to trainees from a wide range of abilities and backgrounds. There are clear explanations of the terms used in the policy and examples are given to clarify their meaning. The rights and responsibilities of staff and trainees are set out in straightforward language. A copy of the policy is given to staff on the first day of their employment and to trainees during their induction. A reference list of equal opportunities legislation is out of date. The company has a well-developed system for collecting and responding to trainees' complaints. All complaints are recorded and team leaders take prompt action, in conjunction with senior managers to rectify any problems. Follow-up action on complaints is recorded in detail. A concise grievance procedure is set out in the equal opportunities policy.

37. Data about trainees' backgrounds are collected but are not analysed to identify under-represented groups on the training programmes. The company does not routinely analyse retention and achievement rates in terms of the trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities. Trainees are tested during induction on their understanding of equal opportunities. They have, however, poor understanding of the equal opportunities policy and grievance procedures. Issues relating to equal opportunities are not discussed with the trainees during their progress reviews. The Fareport centre is not easily accessible to trainees in wheelchairs. Publicity materials for use in schools includes a statement about the company's commitment to equal opportunities. They do not contain pictures of trainees from a diversity of communities and cultural backgrounds.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

38. All staff take part in the self-assessment process and are encouraged regularly by managers to identify areas for improvement. Team leaders frequently hold discussions with members of their teams to discuss quality assurance issues. Staff identified areas for improvement in the first self-assessment report, produced in 1999, and action was taken to improve aspects of support for trainees. Initial assessment was made more systematic. The company is now taking action to improve training, assessment and internal verification carried out on its premises. Managers analyse feedback from trainees and employers systematically and have taken action on it. For example, retailing and customer service apprentices requested a specialist training area at the Fareham centre and this was quickly provided.

39. The self-assessment report is largely descriptive and contains little evaluation. Inspectors considered strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. They found significant strengths and weaknesses the company had not identified. The self-assessment report failed to cover trainees' retention and achievement rates adequately. Inspectors awarded grades for retailing and customer service, leadership and management, and quality assurance which were lower than those given in the self-assessment report. They agreed with the other grades awarded by the company.

40. The company is in the process of developing a quality assurance system. Managers do not systematically monitor the quality of off-the-job training. Evaluative observation of training sessions at the training centres is not carried out. A training session plan has been introduced. This does not, however, encourage trainers to make assessment an integral part of training activities. There is no procedure for monitoring and standardising assessment practices between assessors and across all occupational areas. Internal verifiers observe assessors carrying out assessment in the workplace. They do not, however, check that assessors use an appropriate range of assessment methods.