

INSPECTION REPORT

Heart Of England Training Limited

11 June 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

Heart of England Training Limited is a private training company, based in Rugby, Coventry and Birmingham. It provides training in business administration, retailing and customer service, and hairdressing. There are 269 trainees, following modern apprenticeship and other work-based training programmes. Most of these attend the company's training centres for their off-the-job training. On-the-job training is carried out in companies in Coventry and Birmingham, and throughout the county of Warwickshire, including Rugby.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Although the quality of work-based training is satisfactory in hairdressing, it is unsatisfactory in business administration and very weak in retailing and customer service. The leadership and management of Heart of England Training are unsatisfactory.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory in hairdressing, but unsatisfactory in business administration and very weak in retailing and customer services. At the time of the inspection, the company has 223 modern apprentices and 46 trainees following NVQs.

In hairdressing, achievement rates are good for NVQ learners, at an average of 72 per cent over the past four years. However, achievement rates on both of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is low, averaging 41 per cent for advanced modern apprentices and 37 per cent for foundation modern apprentices. In business administration, the achievement of frameworks for modern apprentices is also low. Over the past four years, the average achievement is 37 per cent and only 31 per cent for advanced modern apprentices. The achievement of NVQs is often poor. There has been considerable improvement in the retention rates of trainees, year-on-year, from 25 per cent in 1998-99 to 86 per cent in 2000-01. However, the average retention rate of 52 per cent is low. In retailing and customer service, retention and achievement rates are very poor. Retention rates, over the past four years, are 30 per cent and in the same period, achievement rates are only 2 per cent. For the apprenticeship programmes, there has been no completion of frameworks, owing to poor key skills and NVQ achievements. There have been no NVQ achievements by apprentices since 1999.

Practical teaching in hairdressing is strong. In business administration, off-the-job training is well planned and given, but on-the-job training is inadequately planned. Training is particularly poorly planned in retailing. Training sessions are usually well

resourced. Trainees receive good pastoral care in all areas except retailing. Employers provide good work placements in business administration. Overall, there is inadequate monitoring of trainees' progress and progress reviews are insufficiently focused on target-setting. Internal verification is satisfactory in all areas but especially strong in hairdressing.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Heart of England Training are unsatisfactory. The company has a clear strategy for its operations and development, and business planning is thorough and consultative. Staff appraisals are well conducted and there is an active staff training programme. However, management has failed to deal with poor achievement and retention rates, poor target-setting and ineffective management of retailing training programmes. There is good monitoring of equal opportunities data, but the implementation of the equal opportunities policy is not monitored. Basic quality assurance procedures are now established, but they have not secured improvements in key areas, such as achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. The self-assessment process is incomplete. The self-assessment report identified some of the strengths but it did not include many of the weaknesses identified at inspection. An action plan was drawn up as a result of self-assessment.

GRADES

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	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

- thorough internal verification in hairdressing
- good practical teaching in hairdressing
- particularly effective off-the-job training in business administration
- comprehensive and individual personal support for learners
- good work placements in customer services and business administration
- good monitoring of equal opportunities data
- thorough staff appraisal and training
- clear strategic direction with effective and responsive business planning

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate self-assessment report
- insufficient monitoring of implementation of the equal opportunities policy
- weak quality assurance arrangements
- little effective reporting and evaluation of achievement and retention data
- poor monitoring of progress and target-setting for trainees
- inadequately planned on-the-job training in business administration
- poorly managed retailing training
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further develop strategies to recruit more men and minority ethnic trainees
- enhance the use of information technology for management information
- develop an assessor forum in hairdressing
- ensure greater consistency in training records
- introduce more structure to hairdressing theory lessons
- more effective quality assurance arrangements

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Heart of England Training Limited (HOET) was established in 1996. It developed from the Martanne Hair Designers artistic team, which provided in-house training, shows and demonstrations in Britain and across Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, the Martanne organisation became a managing agency, providing training to hairdressers in Warwickshire and Birmingham. Hairdressing training remains important to the company, but other vocational areas have been added, including business administration, management, information technology, customer service and retailing.

2. HOET employs 28 full-time and part-time staff. Its head office is in Rugby and the company has five training centres in Rugby, Coventry and Birmingham. The company has approximately 160 employers offering work placements across Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire. It currently provides training for 269 trainees, following modern apprenticeship and other work-based training programmes leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Training is funded through contracts with the Coventry and Warwickshire and the Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs).

3. Rugby is a small market town set in a rural community. The newly developed rail and freight terminal is creating new jobs within several service sectors and there has been recent developments in the distribution sector in the area. Coventry is an industrial city, which has undergone considerable change over the past 25 years, with the decline of the motor industry. Manufacturing job losses have continued, despite substantial investment by manufacturing companies. Increased automation of production processes is a significant contributory factor to a reduction in employment. Birmingham is Britain's second city with a population of over one million. Like Coventry, it has a large minority ethnic community.

THE INSPECTION

4. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at HOET during June 2001. They interviewed 47 trainees, 25 of HOET's staff and visited 17 employers, where they interviewed 15 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded eight training and assessment sessions. They examined a range of documents, including trainees' portfolios of evidence, trainees' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, internal and external verification documents and reports and promotional literature. HOET's self-assessment report of February 2001 was reviewed.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Total	0	1	5	2	0	0	0	8

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	66	4

5. There are 47 modern apprentices training in business administration, leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Forty-three are advanced modern apprentices and four are foundation modern apprentices. Nineteen are on other training programmes. The pattern of training varies, covering day-release and full-time training in HOET's training centres and training at work. Off-the-job training takes place mostly at the Rugby and Coventry training centres. A small group of apprentices and other trainees attend the Birmingham training centre. Those at Rugby and Coventry are offered additional qualifications, mainly customer service, as part of their training. One group of apprentices, with a single large employer, studies part-time at college for an examination-based qualification. There are six full-time staff. Four are qualified assessors and two are internal verifiers. Trainees who do not attend for day-release are visited at the workplace every two weeks. Training is planned for trainees to progress, if appropriate, from the level 2 to 3 NVQ within 12 months and for them to complete level 3 within a further 12 months. All trainees receive a progress review every 12 weeks. The self-assessment report does not identify the strengths identified by inspectors. It accurately identifies poor retention rates and poor achievement targets on individual training plans as weaknesses and inspectors identified others.

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)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					8		48		16	100
Still in training					1	12	12	25	7	44
FMA framework completed					1	12	21	44	7	44
NVQ level 2 completed					5	62	27	56	9	56

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			5		54		115		97	100
Still in training			0	0	5	9	27	23	64	66
AMA framework completed			0	0	10	19	25	22	19	20
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	26	48	26	23	23	24
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	27	50	33	29	23	24

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			90		46		33		17	100
Still in training			0	0	2	4	3	9	11	65
Individual learning plan completed			0	0	7	15	11	33	4	24
Left without completing individual learning plan			35	39	14	30	12	36	2	12
NVQ level 2 completed			18	20	19	41	7	21	2	12
NVQ level 3 completed			45	50	5	11	3	9	1	6

STRENGTHS

- excellent support for trainees
- good work placements
- particularly effective off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement and retention rates
- inadequately planned on-the-job training
- weak target-setting at progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater consistency in training records
- better monitoring systems for trainees
- further engage employers in planning training

6. HOET's staff provide good support for trainees. Satisfactory induction and initial

assessment is carried out at the training centres or within work placements. Apprentices are regularly visited at work and feel able to approach staff when they need assistance or information. Staff also work sensitively and helpfully to encourage and develop the confidence of trainees in the training centres. As the self-assessment report indicates, there are numerous examples of trainees having individual needs identified and met. Additional support needs are identified and resolved through group work and one-to-one training sessions.

7. There is a good network of employers. Effective partnerships, including some with large employers, offer good training opportunities for apprentices. In some cases, employers arrange additional in-house training and support for the development of work-related skills. Apprentices are given appropriate responsibilities and inspectors observed them carrying out duties effectively in their workplaces. Some employers allow apprentices to experience various jobs within the workplace to develop understanding and experience across a range of settings.

8. The off-the-job training provided at HOET's training centres is good, appropriately planned and well taught. It involves and engages trainees and they are encouraged to participate and take responsibility. Key skills are an integral part of trainees' project work. Training resources are used effectively and training materials have been developed and are used to support learners. On-the-job training is less effective. While training plans are produced at the start of training, they are generally used to record administrative and summary information. They do not detail the needs of the trainee, the pattern of the on- and off-the-job training and the milestones and targets for achievement. There is no recorded agreement at the start of training which specifies what the employer will do. Some employers do not have sufficient information to make a meaningful contribution to the training.

9. There is poor achievement of targets on the individual training plans. Over the past four years, excluding those still in training, 37 per cent of modern apprenticeship trainees achieved their framework. Over the same period, achievement of the advanced framework is 31 per cent and 56 per cent for the foundation framework. The proportion of trainees leaving with no qualifications has fallen for both levels of the modern apprenticeship. Achievement of individual NVQs is often poor. Over the past three years, 57 per cent of those who started achieved a level 2 qualification in the foundation framework, and only 31 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved a level 3 qualification. For NVQ training, the three year average is 37 per cent. There have been 84 additional qualifications in customer service, levels 2 and 3, achieved by business administration apprentices over the past three years. Work to improve retention rates is having a positive impact. Retention rates have improved year-on-year, increasing from 25 per cent in 1998-99 to 86 per cent in 2000-01. Overall, the retention rate of 52 per cent over the past three years is still low.

10. Assessment and internal verification are effectively carried out, guided by a clear policy and associated procedures. There is an annual sampling plan and a variety of assessment forms are sampled during and upon completion of training programmes.

Assessors meet regularly to review and share working practices. All trainees take part in progress reviews, carried out at work and usually involving the employer. However, records of these reviews reveal an over-emphasis on recording general aspects of progress and welfare, rather than what training is carried out and what progress is made. Comments made by employers and trainees tend to be superficial and agreed actions are not clear. They do not identify what has to be done to enable apprentices to gain the knowledge, skills or experience they need to achieve the NVQ standards. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. While the progress of trainees is recorded, staff have different methods for monitoring and recording, and training records are not consistent.

Good Practice

Trainees who are not placed with an employer and those with additional learning needs are based at HOET's training centres, where one-to-one tuition is available. This prepares them for employment and offers a supportive environment for development. In one session, trainees worked on their key skills by running their own team meeting and planned action points for improvement.

Poor Practice

Individual training plans are not updated in sufficient detail. Employers do not receive the standards which apprentices will be assessed against and training opportunities in the workplace are not recorded. When assessors visit apprentices in the workplace, they have insufficient information about the on-the-job training.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	35	5

11. HOET offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and other work-based training in retailing and customer service, leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Most trainees follow advanced modern apprenticeships. Modern apprentices work towards key skills qualifications throughout their training. There are 30 customer service and five retailing trainees and most of them are employed. Some attend HOET training centres on a day-release basis, while others receive all their training at work. A small number with additional learning needs, attend training centres on a full-time basis, with provision made for work placements. Customer service NVQs are offered as additional qualifications to business administration and hairdressing trainees. There are four part-time assessors and two part-time internal verifiers. Training is planned to be completed within 16 months. Assessors visit trainees in the workplace to carry out assessments and to review their progress. The self-assessment report recognises the weaknesses of poor retention and achievement rates and the limited availability of off-the-job training. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses.

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)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					2		2		1
Still in training					1	50	0	0	1	100

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			7		18		3		12
Still in training			0	0	1	6	0	0	9	75
NVQ level 2 completed			1	14	1	6	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	14	1	6	0	0	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			5						4
Still in training			0	0					3	75
Individual learning plan completed			0	0					1	25
Left without completing individual learning plan			5	100						
NVQ level 2 completed			1	20						
NVQ level 3 completed			1	20					1	25

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive personal support for trainees in customer service
- good work placements for customer service trainees

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate initial assessment
- poorly planned and implemented training
- poor management of retailing training
- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate target-setting and monitoring of trainees' progress

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of workplace visits
- increase employers involvement in training

12. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that learners working towards customer service NVQs enjoy well-planned and effective support. HOET's staff provide valuable training which prepares trainees for work, including interview techniques and mock interviews. Assessors give good personal support during their workplace visits every two weeks. They have an in-depth knowledge of the trainees' jobs and provide effective guidance on portfolio-building. Trainees are at ease with the assessors and value the support and help they are given to find jobs. They are matched with employers who can provide a good range of relevant experiences and tasks. Trainees have extensive opportunities to gather good evidence for their portfolios.

13. Initial assessment is inadequate for retailing and customer service. There is no initial

assessment of key skills and basic skills assessments are not carried out effectively. The identification of trainees' needs is not done routinely or thoroughly and there is no way of checking whether the training is suitable or meeting trainees' needs. There is inadequate planning of training. Some trainees are unable to attend HOET training centres on day-release as it is not always convenient for their employers. There are no training plans for on- and off-the-job training. Training input is minimal, often concentrating on guidance in portfolio-building and not making effective use of trainees' time. There are insufficient opportunities for trainees to share their experiences with others, as most of the training is carried out on a one-to-one basis.

14. There is insufficient contact between assessors and trainees to meet the trainees' needs. Staff who are in contact with trainees on a regular basis are not qualified to teach or assess retail qualifications. Resources for background knowledge are inadequate and trainees rely on materials available at their workplace, some of which are poor, and on verbal information from assessors. Trainees are not progressing.

15. Retention and achievement rates are very poor. Retention rates over the past four years are approximately 30 per cent, with achievement rates at only 2 per cent. There has been no achievement of frameworks by apprentices. There has been no achievement of NVOs by apprentices since 1998-99. HOET's staff are unaware of this weakness owing to insufficient monitoring of achievements and retention rates. Trainees in business administration and hairdressing have achieved customer service qualifications as an additional qualification.

16. There is no comprehensive system to monitor trainees' progress and little action-planning and target-setting for improvements to achievement and retention rates. Progress reviews do not identify progress made and further actions needed. Progress-review documents do not effectively record the outcomes of discussions. The planning of assessments and the checking of background knowledge is not recorded. Employers are involved in progress reviews, but they have insufficient understanding of the training programmes or occupational standards to make a contribution to training and assessment. The self-assessment report identifies assessment and internal verification as strengths, but inspectors considered them to be satisfactory in customer service and poorly implemented in retailing. In retailing, there is little assessment activity carried out and little internal verification.

Good Practice

Customer service is offered to trainees who are following other training programmes. This has proved popular and achievements are good.

Poor Practice

In retailing, the assessor does not keep records of trainees' achievements and targets and programmes of work cannot be planned and managed effectively.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	167	3

17. HOET offers NVQs in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. Training programmes are offered through foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and through NVQ training. There are 168 trainees, of whom 122 are advanced modern apprentices, 21 are foundation modern apprentices and 25 are NVQ trainees. Most learners work in commercial salons for four days each week and attend one of the three HOET training centres for their off-the-job training on one day each week. Some are trained in their salons. Assessment takes place during the off-the-job training and within the work placement salons when HOET assessors visit them. Learners are reviewed by HOET staff in their work placement salons every 12 weeks. All learners are employed. Staff within the training centres are all qualified commercial hairdressers. Customer service is offered as an additional qualification to trainees in Coventry and Warwickshire. There have been no achievements during 2000-01. The self-assessment report is largely descriptive. None of the weaknesses and only one of the strengths identified by inspectors are mentioned in the 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)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			1		25		29		34
Still in training			0	0	0	0	7	24	17	50
FMA framework completed			0	0	5	20	7	24	12	35
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	5	20	28	97	16	47

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			90		106		110		104
Still in training			0	0	1	1	15	14	51	49
AMA framework completed			24	27	48	45	37	34	30	29
NVQ level 2 completed			63	70	60	57	30	27	1	1
NVQ level 3 completed			28	31	56	53	31	28	23	22

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			40		46		27		39	100
Still in training			0	0	3	7	9	33	17	44
Individual learning plan completed			26	65	22	48	5	19	5	13
NVQ level 2 completed			28	70	37	80	17	63	5	13

STRENGTHS

- rapid progress through NVQ levels 2 and 3
- good practical teaching
- good individual support for trainees
- thorough and well-organised internal verification
- good achievement rates for NVQ training

WEAKNESSES

- weak target-setting at progress reviews
- inadequate written feedback on assignments
- late implementation of key skills training
- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increase the use of work-based evidence
- more structure to theory sessions
- more development of assessment by introducing an assessors' forum

18. Trainees progress rapidly through their NVQ training programmes. On average, they achieve the level 2 within 12 months and those on level 3, achieve within two years. This progress is helped by the large number of clients in commercial hairdressing and beauty salons where trainees gain confidence. They are allocated several clients throughout a training session, when a broad range of practical hairdressing tasks take place. Trainees are assessed during this training, and they actively seek out the many possibilities for assessment. The Birmingham training centre in particular, attracts the variety of models which level 3 trainees require to demonstrate advanced skills. Assessors visit trainees in their work placement salons on a regular basis to allow additional assessment. Trainees do not use enough work-based evidence because employers do not always recognise the value of evidence sources such as photographs

and written witness testimonies.

19. Inspectors identified that there is good practical teaching at the training centres. Trainers are all commercial stylists. Practical sessions are lively and interesting, and allow for the diverse range of trainees' needs. Trainees are thoroughly involved in the sessions and discuss the methods and techniques used by trainers. Trainers encourage creativity by allowing trainees to attempt new tasks and their feedback is positive and motivating. The training salons are well resourced and equipped. Training for background knowledge is given in sessions which combine level 2 and level 3 trainees, making it difficult to deal with individual needs. Key skills are not an integral part of the foundation modern apprenticeship. Training for the application of number and communication key skills does not start until trainees are starting their level 3 training. Training for information technology key skills is carried out using drop-in sessions, during the off-the-job training days.

20. As recognised in the self-assessment report, there is good individual support for trainees from HOET's staff. This is most noticeable when staff visit work-placement salons, to carry out progress reviews and assessments. Trainees who do not attend off-the-job training are trained by their employers in their salons, with support from HOET's staff. They search the Internet for materials to help with evidence for portfolios and attend evening sessions organised by the salons. Trainees with personal and physical difficulties are given sound advice and support.

21. Assessment and internal verification are thorough and well organised. Assessors have timetables of verification visits, planned for the year. A monitoring system for the internal verification of assessors is effectively managed by the lead internal verifier. It ensures that all trainees are assessed. Achievement profiles are prepared for all trainees and are regularly updated by assessors and checked by the internal verifier each week. All completed portfolios are checked and there is a 20 per cent sampling of portfolios in progress. New assessors are observed by the internal verifier until they are considered competent. There is no formal assessors' forum for HOET's staff and work-based assessors, which would allow discussion and sharing of good practice.

22. There is a high achievement rate for trainees on the NVQ training programme. Over the past four years, achievement is, on average, 72 per cent. Many trainees completing this training programme also find full-time employment. Over the past four years, however, achievement on both of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. The average achievement for advanced apprentices, excluding those still in training, is 41 per cent, and for foundation apprentices, 37 per cent. In some cases, trainees gain an NVQ and leave before completing the full framework. The portfolios of evidence of full-time trainees in salons are very well constructed, with good referencing. Those of trainees attending off-the-job training are satisfactory. Trainees receive unsatisfactory feedback on their assignments. Comments tend to be vague, with no constructive comments on the content or quality of their work.

23. Demanding targets for qualifications, progression and framework completion are

not set at performance reviews. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Performance reviews do not monitor or record trainees' progress towards their achievement aims. Employers' involvement is limited, reflecting on the trainees' attitude, attentiveness and punctuality. HOET's trainers make their comments in the progress-review documents in advance of review meetings, pre-empting the outcomes of debate with trainees and employers. Two of the three placements officers carrying out progress reviews are not hairdressers, and have little knowledge or understanding of NVQs.

Good Practice

During the off-the-job training sessions level 2 NVQ trainees are able to work on four models each session, and level 3 work on six models each session. This provides excellent opportunities for them to display and develop their skills, and to maximise assessment opportunities.

Poor Practice

Two foundation modern apprentices are only able to attend the off-the-job training every other week, owing to work commitments. This has resulted in them falling well behind with their assessment and portfolio work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

24. HOET is a private limited company. It is part of a larger group of companies, not all of which are involved in training. The managing director is not involved in day-to-day management. The company's manager is responsible for training and financial management, and is assisted by an accounts manager, a marketing manager, two lead internal verifiers, a training manager, and 16 trainer/assessors. There are six administrative staff. The company has produced three self-assessment reports, including the most recent in February 2001, written under the framework of 'Raising the Standard'. The self-assessment report for equal opportunities mostly reflects the conclusions of inspectors. In other aspects, a number of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors are not identified in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic direction
- effective and responsive business-planning
- thorough staff appraisal and training
- good monitoring of equal opportunities data

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poorly managed training in retailing
- insufficient monitoring of the equal opportunities policy
- inadequate target-setting
- little effective reporting and evaluation of achievement and retention data
- weak quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate self-assessment report

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of quality assurance arrangements
- increase the use of observation of training
- further improve physical access to training facilities
- further development of strategies to recruit more men and minority ethnic trainees
- enhance the use of information technology for management information

25. There are close and positive working relationships between the manager and managing director and their respective responsibilities are clear. The managing director concentrates on the strategic aims of the company, which are regularly reviewed and clearly expressed in annual business and development plans. Strategic aims and

business plans are fully shared with staff and their views are valued. Annual meetings introduce the strategy to staff and frequent team meetings keep them up to date. In the annual business plan, broad targets are set and priorities identified for development. While these are used to set targets for the manager and staff, most are related to the targets for overall recruitment of trainees and financial performance. There are few targets set for recruitment or performance at programme level.

26. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff appraisal is well-conducted, comprehensive and up to date. It helps to create a successful staff training and development programme. Except for the manager, however, there is no link made between appraisal and individual targets, relating to the business plan. The management team has attended a range of courses on business topics. Other staff attend training relevant to their work as assessors, trainers and verifiers.

27. The manager has recently made changes to the management structure, seeking to improve the management of training and to achieve greater consistency across the training centres. Some improvements have been made, for example, improving retention rates, but management arrangements are failing to successfully tackle some key issues. Training programmes in retailing are poorly managed. Inadequacies in training and assessment have not been dealt with. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report. In all occupational areas, there is poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. The reporting and evaluation of trainees' achievement and retention rates are inconsistent. Different centres gather data in different ways and although reviewed by the manager, data are not shared to provide an overall view of the training. The company is well advanced in its plans to develop the range of on-line management reports available to managers. Currently, data are produced, but the format does not allow easy analysis.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

28. Equal opportunity procedures satisfy legal requirements. There is a concise policy, with an implementation strategy. Trainees' profiles are monitored each month for gender, ethnicity and disability. Comprehensive annual monitoring takes place for learners invited for interview, those attending interview, those starting training and those gaining employment. At 81 per cent of current trainees, there is a significant bias towards recruitment of women. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. In the contractual year 2000-01, none of the 63 starters in hairdressing in Coventry and Rugby, were men. Twelve per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. This is low, compared with the populations of Birmingham and Coventry. Eight per cent of trainees have disabilities.

29. For recruitment, positive steps are taken to improve the proportion of trainees from under-represented groups. Pictures have been used on recruitment literature of a male hairdresser and a black retail trainees. Men attend recruitment events and hairdressing leaflets are targeted at boys' schools. Schools with a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups receive particular attention. A recruitment campaign was undertaken in an area with a high minority ethnic population, in conjunction with a local council initiative. Recruitment staff undertake equal opportunities training and a bank of useful equal opportunities literature has been developed. Although broad intentions to recruit under-represented groups are identified, clear targets are not set and cannot be monitored precisely.

30. The employers' guide to work-based training effectively details expectations of fair recruitment, treatment at work, training opportunities and complaints and harassment. Trainees' interviews refer to equal opportunities. At induction, trainees cover equal opportunities procedures of the employer and HOET and can recall this, but not in depth. A recently acquired video of good practice has already been used. The complaints procedure is rarely used, although there are examples of problems being dealt with outside the formal process.

31. The poor monitoring of the equal opportunities policy is not identified in the self-assessment report. Trainees are not routinely asked about equal opportunities during monitoring in the workplace. Employers' equal opportunities policies are insufficiently considered. Although the two main recruitment leaflets carry an equal opportunities statement, this is not extended to advertisements. HOET's training facilities are not all readily accessible to wheelchair users, particularly in Rugby. In many cases, alternative arrangements can be made to access them.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

32. HOET has a quality assurance framework largely focused on contract compliance and audit. Internal verification is particularly well managed in hairdressing and satisfactorily across the rest of the organisation. A newly established meeting for internal verifiers helps in the sharing of good practice. The quality assurance procedures manual, now in its fifth edition, provides a useful basis for development for staff. However, the policies are not comprehensive and the procedures are insufficiently detailed, leading to inconsistent interpretation. The quality assurance team brings together key managers from all centres. The self-assessment report identified that this group still needs to demonstrate its effectiveness and inspectors agreed. Although it reviews progress against the quality assurance action plan at its monthly meetings, it is overly concerned with operational matters and does not adequately cover continuous improvements. Staff raise problems relating to quality assurance at their meetings and these are detailed in the minutes. Feedback is regularly collected from trainees and employers. Induction for trainees and employees is observed. Lead internal verifiers observe training, but the sample observed is relatively small. The manager and senior staff attend external good practice forums

33. Quality assurance systems are not directed towards improvements to training. For example, the self-assessment report identifies retailing and customer service achievements as a weakness, but has no action plan to set targets for improvement. Considerable data are collected but are not used as the basis for setting targets for improvement. For example, the target to improve trainees' retention rates by 20 per cent, in retailing and customer service and business administration, is not based on any analysis of leavers. Lack of analysis also prevents the identification of trends.

34. Self-assessment is not an integral part of quality assurance arrangements. The manager wrote the current report. Although the quality assurance team discussed the finished report and all staff received a copy, they made no formal contributions to its development. The report is descriptive, with little use of performance data to help identify the extent of improvement. Inspectors did not agree with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given by the organisation.

Good Practice

An annual training day is organised by HOET's managing director and manager to discuss the strategic plan with all staff. The presentation of the plan leads to discussion of priorities for the future and dealing with current challenges.

Poor Practice

HOET's equal opportunities statement does not appear on all publicity materials, as stated in their equal opportunities policy.