

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
JULY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
AUGUST 2001

Catten College



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 *learndirect* 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 Catten College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for hair and beauty and management of training. 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 hair and beauty and management of training 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).

Catten College provides satisfactory training in care and hairdressing. Learners benefit from a wide range of good work placements. Some aspects of the hairdressing programmes are not well managed and the effectiveness of some new developments is not monitored sufficiently. The college has a strong, well-developed system for pastoral support and effective referral systems enabling learners to access a range of specialist support agencies. Staff display good teamwork and there are clear lines of communication. A broad range of equal opportunities activities take place to raise employers and learners' awareness and to encourage widening participation in training from the community. The NVQ internal verification systems are well recorded, comprehensive and include good support for the work-based assessors. The management information systems provide useful reports, which are used to inform management decisions. The self-assessment process is effective and there are many examples to show how self-critical analysis has been used to make positive changes to programmes. At the time of both inspections, there were few learners on the sport and leisure programme, and training on this was not inspected. In both the original inspection and the reinspection, however, the sport and leisure programme was taken into account when making judgements about generic areas. The college has rectified many of the weaknesses identified during the original inspection.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	4
Health, care & public services	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair and beauty	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of work placements
- ◆ broad range of equal opportunities awareness-raising activities
- ◆ well-developed system for pastoral support
- ◆ effective management of staff
- ◆ comprehensive NVQ internal verification processes
- ◆ good strategic action to implement change
- ◆ effective self-assessment process promoting continuous improvement

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient management of aspects of hairdressing programmes
- ◆ lack of detail in business planning

INTRODUCTION

1. Catten College is a small, privately owned training organisation. Originally based in Dovercourt, Essex, it moved some of its training to Colchester in 1997 and the remainder in January 2000. The college is based in a leisure centre, which is the only non-military building on Colchester Garrison in Essex. The college serves the local region with learners being recruited from within a 25-mile radius. The college offers flexible training options and not all learners attend the college premises for their off-the-job training. Some learners receive all their training at employer's premises, while some others travel to the training centre.

2. In 1983, the current managing director established training for catering and community care and expanded a year later to include, beauty therapy and leisure and recreation, and five years later, hairdressing. At this stage, all training was subcontracted to a local college. In 1988, the college stopped offering catering training. At the time of the original inspection the college held a contract with Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based training for young people, for the year 2000-01, in the areas of hairdressing, beauty therapy, sport, recreation and leisure occupations and direct care. At the time of the reinspection the college was contracted by the Essex Learning Skills Council (LSC) to provide training programmes in care, hairdressing and leisure, sports and travel. In addition to government-funded programmes, the college offers a range of related qualifications including basketball coaching, community sports leader training, Indian head massage, manicure, pedicure, cosmetic make-up and beauty, customer service, leisure and tourism, information technology and first aid. Under its contract with the local LSC, the college offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and other work-based training programmes for young people leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Following the original inspection, the college management took the decision not to continue with beauty therapy training but to increase the number of learners on care programmes. At the time of the reinspection there were seven full-time members of staff and 10 part-time staff, most of whom worked for approximately two days each week.

3. At the time of the original inspection, the college had 56 learners, of whom 18 were on hairdressing programmes, 10 on beauty therapy programmes, 26 on care programmes and two on sport and recreation programmes. In total there were 10 modern apprentices, 31 national trainees and 15 learners on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of these learners, 35 were taking a first aid qualification and nine a customer service NVQ in addition to their NVQs. The grade for the observation of first aid training to beauty therapy learners was included in the hair and beauty section. All modern apprentices and national trainees were taking key skills. Most of the learners' work placements were with small, independent businesses with fewer than 15 employees. The two learners on the sport and recreation training programme were interviewed at their employer's premises by inspectors, to be included in the inspection sample for the generic areas. However, the occupational area of sport and recreation was not reported on

in either inspection owing to the low numbers of learners. At the time of reinspection, there were 58 learners at Catten College. There were three foundation learners and two foundation modern apprentices on leisure, sport and travel programmes, and seven foundation modern apprentices and one foundation learner on hairdressing programmes. Twenty-nine foundation modern apprentices, five foundation learners and one work-based training learner were on health care and public services programmes.

4. In July 2000, the unemployment rate in Colchester was low at 1.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.5 per cent. By June 2001, it had fallen further to 1.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. The main industries locally are communication, financial services, distribution, hotels and transport, which account for 29 per cent of total employment. Computing is an area of growth. Engineering and manufacturing are decreasing. Total employment is forecast to rise by over 1 per cent in 2000-02. Catten College's data suggest that 89 per cent of employers in Colchester are now aware of NVQs, which is an increase on previous years. In 1999 and 2000, the proportions of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above were 44 and 56 per cent respectively, compared with the respective national averages of 47.9 and 49.2 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, the population from minority ethnic groups in Colchester was 2.2 per cent. At reinspection it is 2.3 per cent of the population from non-white groups, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Catten College produced a self-assessment report prior to the original inspection in January 2000. The college provided inspectors with two updates to its action plan to show the interim progress between January and July 2000. Essex TEC provided the college with initial consultancy support for self-assessment in autumn 1999. A senior manager and administrator began the self-assessment process. In August 1999, the principal took charge of self-assessment along with another senior manager. The principal led a self-assessment team. The team includes four staff members and three learners to represent different programme areas. The occupational areas in the self-assessment report are leisure, sport and travel, hair and beauty and health, care and public services, despite leisure, sport and travel not being included as a separate occupational section in the inspection. Catten College self-assessed its full range of work-based training programmes. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those given by Catten College in two areas and a higher grade in one area. The three other areas included in the inspection were awarded lower grades in each case from those given in the self-assessment report.

6. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Catten College in July 2000. Inspectors examined paperwork from the college and awarding bodies. They interviewed a range of the college's staff. Twenty-two work placements were visited and during these visits 21 workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors examined assessment and internal verification records, learners' work, records of learners' progress, review documents and NVQ and key skills portfolios. They observed monitoring and assessment visits in workplaces and interviewed 50 learners. The following table shows the grades given to sessions by Catten College staff covering, interviews of prospective learners, induction sessions, learners' reviews, NVQ training and assessment on and off the job, key skills and first aid sessions. In addition, inspectors observed a session for Catten College learners given by staff from the careers service, but this was not graded.

7. In preparation for reinspection, the college prepared a post-inspection plan. It also produced a new self-assessment report in April 2001 and since then this has been updated. Two members of the senior management team attended an ALI conference for providers preparing for reinspection. Self-assessment and improvement became the main focus of the monthly staff meetings which involve both full-time and part-time staff. Compared with the grades given in the revised self-assessment report, the grade the inspectors awarded for management of training was higher and the grade they gave for hairdressing was the same.

8. Two inspectors spent a total of eight days at Catten College in August 2001 carrying out the reinspection. They interviewed 14 college staff, 14 learners, 11 workplace supervisors and visited 11 workplaces. They observed five hairdressing training sessions at the college and in learners' salons. An initial assessment session for a new hairdressing learner was observed, but not graded. Inspectors

examined learners' individual learning plans, NVQ portfolios, staff files, college documentation and external agency reports. When planning the reinspection, inspectors used the self-assessment report prepared in July 2001 and an updated version for hairdressing dated 16 August 2001.

Grades awarded to observed sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty	1	1	4	0	0	6
Health, care & public services	0	4	1	1	0	6
Total	1	5	5	1	0	12

Grades awarded to observed sessions at reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty	0	3	2	0	0	5
Total	0	3	2	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

9. Currently the college has 10 advanced modern apprentices working towards level 2 NVQ in hairdressing. They are employed in eight salons in Colchester and the surrounding areas. Eight learners attend college one day each week for practical and theory work. At most salons learners have weekly planned training sessions and are taught by salon trainers. The two other learners receive all practical training in their workplace salon and are trained by salon trainers. Theory is taught once each month at the workplace by Catten College staff. Key skills for all learners are taught at Catten College. The small modern ground-floor salon and reception area at Catten College have been refurbished since the original inspection. Part of the salon is divided off as a practice area. The college salon is used for training purposes one day each week and, at other times, as a commercial salon providing hair and beauty services for clients. Learners' progress review meetings take place in the salons every eight weeks. Two part-time members of staff teach on the hairdressing programme, and one has teaching qualifications. Both are qualified assessors and internal verifiers and are also qualified to work in commercial salons.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no work placements for all but one beauty therapy modern apprentice
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ insufficient off-the-job training facilities and resources
- ◆ lack of understanding of NVQ requirements by some learners and employers
- ◆ slow progress toward NVQs and key skills achievements

◆ poor retention and achievement rates

10. Following the original inspection, senior management took the decision not to recruit more learners to the beauty therapy programme because of continuing difficulty in finding work placements. More assessment is now carried out in the workplace. Six out of the eight salons now have assessors. In September 2001, staff from the other two salons will take courses to become qualified assessors. Two peripatetic assessors from the college carry out additional assessments in the salons. Learners' portfolios contain a diverse range of evidence. Action has been taken to improve facilities and resources for off-the-job training. The college salons have been completely refurbished. The small hairdressing salon is now modern, well equipped and has natural light through large windows. Employers and learners have a better understanding of the NVQ process and the apprenticeship framework. Training in key skills has become an integral part of the hairdressing programme and takes place from the outset. Effective action has been taken to improve learners' retention and achievement rates. The retention rate on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme has risen from 50 per cent in 2000-01, to 100 per cent in 2001-02. Learners' achievement rates for 2000-01 have not been finalised but the indications are that they rise to 50 per cent, compared with 25 per cent in 1999-2000. Arrangements for the initial assessment of learners has been improved. A member of the senior management team assesses all applicants individually. Potential applicants complete a two-week trial period following their assessment interview. They also undergo tests in basic skills and key skills and their preferred learning styles are identified. During this initial interview and assessment process, applicants discuss with staff their previous occupational experience and learning and whether this can be accredited. Initial assessment results are taken into account when drawing up individual learning plans. The plans specify target dates for the completion of NVQ units. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the updated self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working and learning environments
- ◆ effective team teaching
- ◆ well-designed training programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient management of hair programme

11. Learners have access to good, well-resourced work and learning environments. They work in busy commercial salons, using a range of modern equipment, tools and professional products. The standard of work in the salons ranges from good to excellent. Learners receive on-the-job training in set weekly sessions or on a continuous basis as they carry out their work. The training that the learners receive on the job, complements and consolidates their practical skills training in the college. One salon provides its learners with all their practical training in-house through a planned programme. Highly skilled and suitably experienced hairdressers carry out on-the-job training. Many employers enable

their learners to attend specialist training courses organised with product manufacturers and training academies. Catten College and the employers encourage learners to attend national hair events to broaden their learning and experience.

12. The training salon is now bright and well appointed, housing modern equipment and professional products. Natural light streams into the salon and is reflected off the well-positioned large mirrors. The salon is small but appropriately laid out to cater for approximately six learners at any one time. The rear salon, which was previously a suite of beauty rooms, now has toning tables. The college is based within a busy leisure centre, which offers a range of facilities that are used effectively to further the learners' learning. The annual hair show is presented within a large function room at the leisure centre, which has a purpose-built stage and appropriate lighting effects. Hairdressing theory and key skills are taught in small first-floor theory rooms adequately equipped with teaching resources. The college has bought a large number of reference books and videos for learners' use. The information technology suite houses nine computer work stations giving access to the Internet and college website. Learners have access to a computer when they need one to complete assignments or to research topics. In the two areas where practical and theory training are carried out, a variety of mannequin heads are available to the learners upon which they can practise their skills.

13. The college has established good communications and a strong rapport with work placement providers. Staff carry out team teaching with employers who visit the college to give demonstrations of practical skills relating to the level 2 NVQ units. After being taught theory, the learners are immediately given a demonstration of related practice by an employer. Learners are invited to ask questions. At the end of the session, the tutor summarises what has been learnt. These demonstrations are also used as a means of helping the hairdressing training staff to update their skills. Learners receive a certificate in recognition of their attendance at these demonstrations. Several employers have become involved with the organisation and presentation of the hair shows. They have judged the annual hair competitions. A monthly newsletter goes out to the salons keeping them informed of events, significant developments and learners' success in gaining NVQs. It also informs employers of training which the colleges offers their employees free of charge, such as courses on information technology, the use of the Internet, and those leading to training and coaching qualifications. A trainer at one salon is currently completing a coaching unit and staff at two salons have been booked onto courses leading to assessor qualifications. Employers are invited to give feedback on the hairdressing programme. They reply to questionnaires and are invited to attend the self-assessment meetings that take place at the college each month.

14. Since the original inspection, the hairdressing programme has been redeveloped. All aspects of the programme have been reviewed. Teaching and learning support materials have been standardised. A scheme of work has been drawn up which sets out a programme of sessions on set topics relating to specific NVQ units. All learners and their employers are given a copy of the scheme of

work with the aim of achieving better co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. At the beginning of each session, the trainer writes up on a flipchart the objectives for the session, and the learning activities through which these will be achieved. The trainer discusses these with the group. At the end of the session, the trainer summarises what has been taught. The learners are given homework sheets giving details of tasks to be completed and identifying what they should observe in the workplace. The learners receive reviews of their progress in the workplace every eight weeks. The reviews are carried out by college staff and they also involve placement supervisors. The member of staff, the supervisor and the learner agree short-term targets and ways of co-ordinating training. Ways of gaining really useful information and feedback from learners and employers have been introduced. Employers are invited to attend self-assessment meetings. They answer questionnaires and their responses are analysed. In training sessions, the ratio of tutor to learners is good and there are no more than eight learners in any one group. In practical sessions, two tutors often work together, with one carrying out assessment and the helping individual learners.

15. There is, however, insufficient management of the different aspects of the programme to ensure that they are co-ordinated properly. Many new developments are being introduced simultaneously and there are insufficient checks to ensure that they are proving effective. For example, although the results from the newly introduced initial assessments are taken into account in individual learning plans, the plans themselves are not being used effectively. Learners are slotted into the rolling programme as they arrive. Two learners, who were on their second week of programme, attended colouring and cutting workshops before receiving training in basic foundation skills relating to health and safety and client consultation. In the work placements, employers are not using the NVQ criteria as a guide during training sessions. Assessment planning is insufficiently thorough. It does not cover the assessment of key skills. The competences assessed are not cross-referenced sufficiently to different NVQ units. In the off-the-job training environment, importance is placed on the strict observation of health and safety regulations. The college carries out insufficient checks, however, on whether health and safety regulations are fully adhered to in work placements. Neither of the hairdressing tutors has teaching qualifications or substantial experience of managing training programmes. The two part-time hairdressing tutors have considerable commercial experience in hairdressing and have managed salons.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

16. There are 26 trainees working towards NVQs in care. There are six modern apprentices working on the NVQ at level 3 and 18 national trainees on NVQs at level 2 in care. Two trainees on work-based programmes are on the NVQ for young people at level 2 in care. Until 1999-2000, the college only offered work-based training programmes for young people in this occupational area. In January 2000, the TEC requested that all trainees convert to national traineeships if on level 2 or modern apprenticeships if on level 3. This change affected nine trainees who were partway through their programme and who needed to take key skills in

addition to the NVQs. In 1997-98, two trainees converted to national traineeship programmes. Of the 21 trainees recruited, one remained on the programme, nine left with no achievement, five left having completed their individual training plans, and the remainder left with NVQs in varying stages of completeness. In 1998-99, four trainees converted to national traineeship programmes. Of the 17 trainees recruited to other work-based programmes for young people, two remained on the programme, two left having completed their individual training plans, seven left with no achievement and the remainder left with NVQs in various states of completeness. In 1999-2000, nine trainees were recruited to other work-based training programmes for young people. Five converted to national traineeship programmes. Two remained on their programmes. One left with no achievement, and the other left with a partially completed NVQ. There were also five modern apprentices recruited this year, all of whom are still in training, and 17 national trainees of whom only two have left early with partially completed NVQs. There are 16 employed trainees on the programmes with all other trainees in appropriate work placements. There are 16 workplaces involved in the programmes. These include residential and nursing homes for the elderly, services for people with learning disabilities, a care home for people with mental health problems and the district hospital. All work placements are within a 20-mile radius of the college. There are no minimum entry criteria for the programme and some trainees are employees when they join the programme. Other trainees are directly recruited for the programme and are found appropriate work placements by the college.

17. Off-the-job training is provided at the college. Level 3 trainees attend one day a week and level 2 trainees attend one day a fortnight. Training in the occupational area is in the mornings, run by one trainer/assessor who is occupationally experienced. Key skills training is given in the afternoons by a specialist key skills trainer. The care trainer/assessor is also responsible for assessment in the workplace. A target has been set to increase the number of work-based assessors. The college employs a part-time internal verifier to work on the care programme. Responsibilities for standardisation of assessment practice are shared between the trainer/assessor and the internal verifier. Meetings with employers are arranged four times a year to exchange information about the programme.

18. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and two weaknesses with a further weakness identified at a subsequent self-assessment meeting. Of the strengths, one was found to be no more than normal practice, one was confirmed by inspectors, one was more applicable to trainee support and one was linked to a weakness identified by inspectors. Inspectors found another strength concerning rigorous assessment. Of the weaknesses, one was confirmed by inspectors, others were not found and an additional one was identified by inspectors. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive off-the-job training
- ◆ rigorous assessment practices

- ◆ good retention of modern apprentices and national trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor key skills training and assessment
- ◆ slow progress to NVQ achievement on work-based training programmes for young people

POOR PRACTICE

The care and key skills trainers do not liaise to identify common ground or topics. For example in the morning care session the knowledge requirements for the NVQ unit in communication were covered and the same topic was covered in the afternoon key skills session.

19. All trainees attend the college for off-the-job training in small groups. Topics to be covered during the sessions are planned in advance and clear outcomes are set for each session. Training methods used include a combination of formal input, self-directed learning and one-to-one support and this effectively enables a range of learning styles to be met. The formal sessions are based on the knowledge requirements of the NVQ units. Throughout the training, clear links are made between theory, the NVQ requirements and workplace practice. Trainees clearly enjoy the training sessions, and when part of the day was given to key skills sessions they negotiated with the trainer to begin sessions earlier. The trainer encourages discussion so trainees can bring up topics which are important to them, and helps trainees to identify what might be suitable evidence to look for regarding each unit. The trainer has worked with each of the different groups to encourage a safe environment where trainees are able to discuss subjects openly and to learn from each other's experience. The training room is equipped with appropriate visual aids including a flipchart, overhead projector and television. Books, leaflets and other learning materials are available for trainees to use for their self-directed study. On-the-job training is of a high quality in care workplaces.

20. All trainees have regular work-based assessment of naturally occurring activities. For 75 per cent of trainees, this is done by the college's trainer/assessor. Where work-based assessors are available, they undertake assessment and this is encouraged by the college. Assessment planning is done in partnership with the trainees and it is well structured and clearly recorded so that trainees understand what is required of them. This gives them ownership of the assessment process for which they provide evidence in good-quality portfolios. The use of unit tracking forms means that trainees and their employers understand what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. There are regular and thorough observations which are clearly recorded and cross-referenced across the NVQ units where appropriate. Activity-based assessment is used, where possible, to make use of naturally occurring evidence. Trainees' knowledge is confirmed after the assessment using pre-set questions devised by the trainer/assessor. These cover all the knowledge requirements and are written in language which the trainees understand easily. Clear written and verbal feedback is given to trainees following assessments and this is supported by clearly recorded assessment decisions. Units are internally verified when they are complete and feedback is given to both the assessor and trainee. A college certificate is given to trainees on completion of an NVQ unit to celebrate achievement until certificates arrive from the awarding body.

21. Key skills training is independent of occupational training. No structured training has been developed to teach key skills, application of number or

information technology. During the sessions, trainees usually complete written work for their NVQs while individuals receive one-to-one support for key skills assignments. Key skills are not linked to the NVQ units in any way. Few links or references are made to the activities trainees are undertaking in the workplace and there are no opportunities for gathering naturally occurring evidence. There is no integration of assessment of key skills for current or planned NVQ evidence with no retrospective assessment of key skills against existing evidence. Trainees are unaware of how key skills fit into their programme, and some believe they cannot achieve their NVQ without key skills. Trainees do not have copies of the key skills standards or requirements. The trainer/assessor is working towards the key skills award and plans to use this experience as a development opportunity for incorporating key skills into ongoing NVQ assessment. Work has yet to be done on this.

22. Overall, the college has had few trainees achieve their NVQ or complete their individual training plan. Modern apprentices and national trainees have not yet been in training long enough to complete their programmes. This includes trainees who converted to these programmes. Until 1999-2000, all trainees were recruited on to work-based training programmes for young people and achievement was poor. Catten College has gradually been encouraging trainees to convert to national traineeships. In 1997-98, only five trainees achieved their NVQs, which was 25 per cent of the group that year. In 1998-99, this number went down to 3 trainees who made up 18 per cent. To date, there have been no NVQ achievements in 1999-2000. This low achievement is acknowledged by the college and actions are being taken to address this. This has included the appointment of a new trainer, who is beginning to improve the quality of training. An overall target has been set of 65 per cent of trainees gaining NVQs this year. To achieve this target, all trainees have clear and realistic targets for unit and qualification completion. Tracking documents have been designed and trainees and employers have a copy of these. There are regular tutorials to check progress and any problems are addressed through three-way meetings with the assessor, trainee and employer. The retention among modern apprentices and national trainees, however, is good, with only two national trainees leaving early in 1999-2000. The college has recognised the weakness regarding the assessment of key skills and has planned to double the number of work-based assessors to speed up assessment and take advantage of additional assessment opportunities. The number of NVQ units completed for this stage on programme by the current trainees is on schedule to meet this target.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

23. The equal opportunities policy is updated annually and is specific in its objectives regarding gender, multicultural education and open access. Co-ordination of equal opportunities is the responsibility of a senior manager. Equality of opportunity is discussed at senior management team meetings but is not a

standing agenda item. Some data on equal opportunities are being collected and analysed. There is an established complaints procedure. Catten College sets targets for recruitment regarding equal opportunities data. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups is slightly more than is representative of the Essex community as a whole. Out of the 28 trainees on hair and beauty programmes, one is a man, two have disabilities and two are from minority ethnic groups. Of the 26 trainees on care programmes, three are men, one is from a minority ethnic group and there are no trainees with disabilities. All trainees on the leisure, sport and travel programmes are women, and no trainees have disabilities or are from minority ethnic groups. Two thirds of staff are part time and two thirds are women. There are equal numbers of men and women among the full-time staff. Staff range in age from 22 to 62, and none are from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report was accurate in its identification of strengths and weaknesses. However, inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of staff development on equal opportunities issues
- ◆ effective equal opportunities awareness-raising activities with employers and trainees
- ◆ broad range of new initiatives to widen participation in training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ restrictive access to training facilities for trainees with mobility difficulties
- ◆ missed opportunities to promote equal opportunities in marketing material

24. The role of the equal opportunities officer is clearly understood by staff. There is a good range of awareness-raising sessions for staff which address legislation, trends, stereotyping issues and methods of promoting equality. These are supported by a data file containing an overview of current and emerging legislation. Staff understand their responsibilities as regards the promotion of equal opportunities and its impact upon trainees.

GOOD PRACTICE

The college funds gym sessions for a hairdressing trainee with physical disabilities to help her.

25. The equal opportunities officer has introduced measures to raise awareness of equal opportunities among employers. The appropriateness of employers' equal opportunities policies are checked during the monitoring of work placements and, where necessary, employers are encouraged to adopt the college's policy and adapt it for their own purpose. Work-based training information packs for employers clearly state the responsibilities of all parties as regards equal opportunities promotion, complaints and grievance. Employers' understanding is monitored during visits from the equal opportunities officer. During induction, trainees complete some original worksheets which challenge their views on gender and racial stereotypes. For example, they are given pictures of three people and asked which one they think is a footballer. They are then asked to discuss their choice, and consider if their choice was swayed by traditionally held stereotypical views. Reviews include continued information on equal opportunities issues. Trainees

have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues regarding gender, race and disability and know what to do in event of harassment and bullying, complaints and grievances. Training rooms and office areas display posters which challenge discrimination and occupational stereotypes.

26. The college is introducing a new range of initiatives to widen participation in training. Links have been made with organisations representing disadvantaged young people. In one area of Essex, in which there are pockets of deprivation, a joint project is underway which seeks to raise the profile of work-based training among less academic year-10 pupils and disengaged pupils in year 11. Trainees participate in an annual hairdressing display sponsored by the local football club and involving its trainee players, during which efforts are made to promote opportunities for training in hair and beauty for school leavers and local employers.

27. Access to training facilities for trainees with mobility difficulties is restrictive. The main entrance to the college has steps with no handrails. The wheelchair ramp is not easily accessible. There are no dedicated car-parking bays. Lavatory facilities for those people with mobility difficulties are inadequate. The training resources are split between two floors and access to the first floor is by stairs. Simple contingency plans have been prepared so that trainees unable to negotiate the stairs can receive training on the ground floor, but this means that they do not have access to all the learning resources.

28. Marketing materials do not effectively promote equal opportunities. Photographs show stereotypical images of trainees undertaking occupational tasks. Photographs often use current trainees. There is a stereotypical gender imbalance by occupation across most programmes. There are just three men taking care, two of whom were recruited directly from employers, one man taking hairdressing and none taking beauty therapy or leisure, sport and travel programmes. However, the trainees are often trained in mixed gender and mixed ethnic groups, as trainees funded by other sources work with the TEC-funded trainees. For example, the leisure, sport and travel trainees work with trainees who are on a leading sports manufacturer's scholarship scheme including eight footballers who are men. While an open commitment to equal opportunities is stated on promotional materials, there is no attempt to challenge traditional conventions through example. Many of the marketing materials are densely textual for occupational areas in which young people are more practical, active and visual. There is a lack of targeted marketing material to address the gender imbalance on the training programmes.

Trainee support

Grade 3

29. Trainees are usually referred to the college by the careers service, their employers or by recommendation from previous trainees. Trainees have an individual interview of approximately one hour with a member of the management team, who explains the various training schemes and qualifications available at the college. Prior learning, work experiences and career aims are discussed at the

interview. If the prospective trainee does not have a work placement or employer, the college arranges for a trial two-week work placement for them. When the trainee decides to join the college programme, they take initial assessment tests in literacy and numeracy skills. The results of these are used to make decisions about the level of qualification, training scheme and any additional support needs. The trainees have individual induction sessions with a member of staff at Catten College's premises. They can choose whether to watch an induction video or use an induction CD-ROM. A health and safety tour of the college and leisure centre's premises is included in the induction programme. A short test is used to check the trainees' recall of the induction process and any queries are dealt with at this stage. An occupationally experienced member of Catten College's staff visits the work placement for the trainee's work-based induction. All work placements have health and safety checks prior to trainees being placed and/or accepted as Catten College trainees.

30. Trainees have eight-weekly pastoral visits to their workplaces by a college co-ordinator. These visits are every four weeks for trainees who have been endorsed as requiring additional support to achieve an NVQ. In addition, trainees have eight-weekly tutorials with the college's occupational tutors. Trainees with additional numeracy or literacy support needs have fortnightly sessions for two hours with a specialist tutor at the college. One trainee has additional support sessions in the evening at the local further education college. The college has a range of links to specialist support agencies in the region. Staff from the local careers service visit the college to present sessions to groups of trainees, giving specialist careers advice and helping them prepare curriculum vitae, letters of application for jobs and interview techniques. Trainee support is the management responsibility of the college principal.

31. The self-assessment report was generally accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses. A weakness concerning induction has been addressed effectively and is noted by inspectors as a strength. However, inspectors found an identified strength concerning the accreditation of prior learning to be unsatisfactory. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive new initial interview processes
- ◆ innovative use of resources in new induction programme
- ◆ effective referrals to specialist support services
- ◆ good pastoral support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective review processes
- ◆ some ineffective preparation of realistic individual training plans

32. The new initial interviews are comprehensive. They are carried out with prospective trainees by a member of the management team. They form the first

GOOD PRACTICE

The college used the results of literacy and numeracy tests that a prospective trainee had achieved at a different local college to save the trainee from having to repeat the tests.

stage of the process leading to the trainee being enrolled onto a college programme. The features of the process, including the workplace trial period and feedback system for both the trainee and employer, are carefully explained. This gives the trainee good and clear information about the process. The interviewers follow a standardised application procedure and use an assessment form appropriate to the occupational area that the prospective trainee is interested in. NVQs, the different schemes and key skills are all introduced during the interview. The training and assessment methods are explained simply and clearly and the trainees are given financial and support information. The process is good and the interview itself is thorough, carefully paced, appropriately detailed and welcoming. The prospective trainee is not pressurised to sign onto a programme at the interview and the next stages are explained. Details are kept in confidential trainees' files.

33. There is a good, flexible, visual introduction to all the college management staff on the new induction video, with the same information being on a CD-ROM. Each member of staff introduces a different aspect of the induction programme. Information is given clearly, and at appropriate stages the trainee is encouraged to pause the video or CD-ROM to read and complete the induction pack. At one stage, the instructions tell the trainee to use the audio-tape package and questionnaire and tour the college site to complete the health and safety awareness section. The information is clear, well received by the trainees and well remembered.

34. The college has good links with a range of local specialist support services. Initially, the additional support tutor, who has counselling skills, sometimes talks to trainees. He can advise on suitable external support, and the management team or tutors arrange this with the trainees. Specialist support has been arranged and paid for by the college for trainees with additional literacy and numeracy learning needs, trainees with emotional and social issues, those requiring counselling, and for those needing advice on housing and accommodation. There are good links with the local careers service which visits the college and works with the trainees to prepare them for employment or further qualifications.

35. There is good pastoral support for trainees from all college staff. The college staff work outside college hours to help trainees. This includes arranging transport for a trainee unable to use public transport and accompanying trainees to external counselling sessions, funded by the college. The college co-ordinators visit trainees in their workplaces at a minimum of eight-weekly intervals. In addition, many trainees also have occupational assessors from the college visiting them in their workplaces. Trainees also have tutorials at college to discuss their progress every eight weeks. The college staff are approachable and easy to contact and this is valued by employers and trainees.

36. The review processes are ineffective. They do not systematically follow-up action planning from previous reviews and target setting is unspecific. The co-ordinators' reviews are not systematically linked to the tutorial reviews carried out by college tutors. Records of reviews are filed, and copies are not sent to trainees

or workplace supervisors to remind them of the actions for the next review. The individual action plans are not systematically updated with completed review dates and some have planned review dates missing. The review processes do not drive trainees' progress and targets do not challenge trainees. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.

37. Some trainees' prior learning and experiences are not effectively recognised when preparing their individual training plans. Trainees, employers and college staff acknowledge that some trainees are competent in skills for which they have not been assessed and require no further training. Some trainees are on NVQ level 1 programmes and are receiving additional support for numeracy and literacy, yet their practical work is of level 2 standards. Trainees do not have their occupational skills systematically and effectively assessed at the start of their programmes in order to speed them through areas they are familiar with. Neither does this happen systematically when they progress to the next NVQ level.

Management of training

Grade 2

38. The senior management team of Catten College changed in 1998, when the process of self-assessment started. The team is now made up of three new members and the original managing director who founded the college in 1983. The new senior management team comprises the managing director, college principal, development manager and director. Senior management meetings are held regularly and members of the team work closely together on all aspects of business. The six full-time staff members form the management and administration team. They are the four senior managers, a senior administrator and a junior administrator who is a work-based learner. In addition, there are 10 part-time members of staff. The college was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 1998 and is being reinspected for accreditation in 2001.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient management information systems
- ◆ ineffective staff appraisal system
- ◆ no contracts with external parties to clarify roles and responsibilities
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

39. All weaknesses have been dealt with. The new computerised management information system produces regular, useful reports, and the findings of these are taken into account in management decisions. After receiving training in appraisal methods, the senior staff reformed the staff appraisal system and this is now effective. All external parties have clear contracts, and these specify roles and responsibilities clearly. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training has improved with better communications with employers. Clear links are now made between work and college training. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given in the new self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good team work. At a critical time, a director was ill and away from work for several months. To cope with the director's absence, the managing directors returned to full-time work and the senior managers shared the absent director's responsibilities between them. The absent director was kept informed of developments in the college and was enabled to resume full-time work gradually.

- ◆ effective management of staff
- ◆ good strategic action to implement change
- ◆ comprehensive staff appraisal system
- ◆ good external networking by staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently detailed business planning

40. Staff work in an environment they find supportive and they enjoy working at Catten College. The management style is open and consultative, and staff are encouraged to enter into frank debate about management decisions. Senior managers are approachable, they make themselves available and lead by example. All staff take part in staff meetings, and the times of these are varied to suit individuals. Staff are kept well informed about the college's work, through team meetings. Part-time staff are paid to attend meetings and training events. The monthly staff meetings focus on the action plans drawn up through the self-assessment process. Agendas are circulated, minutes are taken and action points are recorded. Through these meetings, staff are kept up to date with the numbers of learners on the programmes, and the status of various projects and developments within the occupational areas. Staff also discuss progress in implementing initiatives, set new targets and determine action to meet them. New policy documents are issued and discussed at these meetings. Effective use is made of wall charts which give information on learners' progress and dates when learners are expected to achieve their qualifications. When skills which particular staff have are no longer needed, the staff in question are retrained and redeployed effectively. Working hours are arranged to suit the needs and commitments of staff and individual working styles are encouraged and respected. The management team plots the dates of meetings and requisite actions, on a wallchart. This is displayed in a prominent position in the manager's office where all staff can see it. Every month, details of key actions carried out in order to implement the strategic plan, are entered on the chart and initialled.

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good practice in encouraging learners who are reluctant to attend meetings, to make known their views about their training. The staff have placed a noticeboard outside the rooms used for the teaching of theory. Learners are invited to write questions, complaints or details of concerns on small stickers and put these on the noticeboard. Learners then look eagerly for responses from staff. The board is much used and staff are prompt in replying to learners' queries and in taking action on their complaints and concerns.

41. There has been good strategic action to implement change. There has been effective analysis of the cause of weaknesses and appropriate action has been taken to rectify them. All weaknesses identified through the original inspection were dealt with promptly. Ramps, to access the building, have been installed and there are car parking spaces outside the main doors for people with mobility difficulties. Good processes have been introduced for the initial assessment of learners. Initial assessment results are taken into account when drawing up learners' individual learning plans. These plans are realistic and thorough. The process for reviewing learners' progress has been much improved. During their reviews, learners are set clear targets and they engage in detailed action-planning to improve their performance. Document control procedures have been introduced to ensure everyone knows the status of documents in use. Changes have been discussed openly with all parties involved with them and actions have been negotiated skillfully. Training has been provided for staff who are required to take

on new roles and responsibilities.

42. The new staff appraisal procedures are comprehensive. Two senior managers undertook staff appraisal training before introducing them. One director is responsible for appraising all staff, other than the directors, who are appraised by the managing director. All staff receive an annual appraisal and a six-monthly interim review of their work. Job specifications have been reviewed. Following evaluation of the appraisal system, senior managers have decided to have their appraisals carried out by external consultants in order that they may be as objective as possible. A wide range of evidence is taken into account in staff appraisals and includes the findings from self-appraisal, appraisal by colleagues, observations of training, managers' reports and feedback from learners. During appraisals, there is discussion on the extent to which staff have met their personal objectives and have helped to meet those of the college. Documentation for appraisals has been revised and is comprehensive. During their appraisals, the training needs of staff are identified and during the last year, staff have been on a variety of training courses. Training on equal opportunities and health and safety is mandatory for all staff. Some staff have undertaken training in the teaching of key skills. Those staff who request it, can receive training to become a qualified assessor and internal verifier. There is no separate budget for staff development. Managers allocate money to pay for any courses which are thought to be of benefit to both staff and the college. No request for training by staff has been refused.

43. There is good external networking by most members of staff. The managing director was a member of the board of the former Essex TEC. The principal sits on the LSC's quality focus forum. One of the directors is the England youth basketball team manager and chairman of Essex Sports Council. The college belongs to the Coastal Education Training Partnership, which promotes vocational skills to school pupils. This is a new initiative involving five training providers, local schools and employers. School pupils spend up to four days each week in a work environment and one day each week at school, for up to two years. Pupils from two local secondary schools attend college to receive training. The college holds liaison meetings with employers from the occupational areas in which it provides training. Staff who provide training in hair, care and sports are all current practitioners in their respective vocational fields.

44. The goals set out in the business plan and the targets in development plans are too general and insufficiently specific. Progress towards reaching them cannot be measured easily. The business plan is insufficiently detailed. It does not promote the sharing of good practice. It does not cover action to improve some issues unrelated to training, such as the cramped conditions under which staff have to work in some offices.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

45. Catten College has two senior managers who work together to develop quality assurance policies and procedures. As a result of self-assessment, the formal

quality assurance strategy was begun. Staff are informed about quality assurance by induction and ongoing self-assessment meetings. Manuals containing the policies are available to all staff and have recently been sent out to employers. Trainees are made aware of the policies relating to them during induction.

46. The college produced a self-assessment report which is mostly accurate and which inspectors support in many areas. The strengths which had been identified were confirmed as being fundamental to the changes that had taken place within the college. Internal verification processes had not been identified by the college as a strength. Two weaknesses in quality assurance which had been identified were confirmed by inspectors but three others had been corrected since the writing of the self-assessment report, seven months prior to inspection. However the college had not recognised the importance of the inaccuracies in some of the documents it uses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective self-assessment process leading to self-critical analysis and change
- ◆ effective analysis of new quality assurance procedures
- ◆ comprehensive internal verification processes for NVQs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little quality assurance of training activities
- ◆ poor quality assurance of documents
- ◆ some lack of understanding in the use of data

47. All members of Catten College are involved in the self-assessment processes. They are positive and enthusiastic about it and the changes implemented as a result. Monthly meetings are held to look at the action points. The self-assessment report action plans were updated throughout the period leading up to inspection to keep the inspection team informed of progress. The college has produced a new set of targets, including improving the use of evaluation of data, increasing the use of assessment in the workplace and introducing a formal contract for employers. The self-assessment process highlighted problems with the collection and use of data. Changes have been made and action taken to address these issues. The biggest effect has been on the rate of trainees leaving early. Use of the new quality assurance procedures highlighted which programmes had problems with retention and closer monitoring and changes to courses has reduced the number. There was no formal input from employers into the self-assessment process. Trainees are encouraged to use a suggestion box for complaints and to give feedback on their programmes, which are used to feed into the self-assessment process.

48. Before the self-assessment processes were implemented, many policies and procedures were carried out on an informal basis. There is now a new quality assurance strategy from which new policies have been developed. These are issued to all staff within the college. Many of these policies have been introduced in the last six months. There has been an audit on approximately 25 per cent of them.

Any non-compliance has been recorded and an evaluation has been carried out as to whether there is a problem with the policy or with staff's implementation of procedures. Changes have been made and support given where necessary. At present, the college's quality assurance system does not extend to subcontracted training.

49. Internal verification within the NVQ process varies between the two vocational areas, but is comprehensive in both. There are different policy documents for all vocational areas. These policies are well established and were in existence before the development of the new strategy. Detailed planning for internal verification of NVQs ensures folders are seen at least three times during the training programme. Verification of assessment in the workplace takes place twice a year. A specialist vocational internal verifier is employed to monitor the care programme. Detailed records are kept but not always put into the trainee's folder. More time has been allocated for the hairdressing internal verifier. A lack of time had been highlighted in the external verification report. Internal verification is introduced to trainees in the induction video, and all trainees are aware of the process about the roles of the internal and external verifiers.

50. Internal audits and quality assurance do not ensure consistently high standards across all areas of training. A policy for training observations has recently been introduced and approximately 50 per cent of the in-house staff have been observed. There have been no observations of training in the workplace or at the subcontractor's premises. Some in-house training sessions observed by inspectors were not well planned. There is no system for monitoring the resources used by staff. Poor-quality handouts and old teaching resources are being used in some classes.

51. Inconsistencies in documents lead to confusion. A document register has been created to keep track of the versions of the quality assurance procedures. This has not been maintained, so it is not possible to be sure which version of a document should be in use. Signatures are missing from some documents, such as appraisals and internal verifiers' feedback. Incorrect addresses for the college appear on some individual training plans and staff changes have not been made on the TEC contract. Staff details are not always correct, with one curriculum vitae missing from files and one curriculum vitae containing incorrect information. There is no procedure for standardising the way feedback is given to trainees when key skills portfolios are called in for assessment. Some are given detailed feedback while others do not contain any evidence of assessment.

52. Action planning from the evaluation of data has started recently. It is not presented in a consistent format for use when making decisions. Some data are presented in the form of tables, others as summaries with action plans, and others as text. Textual evaluation of the retention and achievement data is confusing. There is no evidence of how actions taken on information collected from trainees and employers are fed back to them. Little use is made of information technology to collate and analyse data. Few staff are trained to use computer software for this purpose. Some data in equal opportunities are being collected and analysed but

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these have only recently been used for action planning.