

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
MAY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION JULY
2001

West Herts College
Government
Training (formerly
West Herts Training
Consortium)



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

SUMMARY

The original inspection of West Herts College Government Training (previously known as West Herts Training Consortium) was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training, quality assurance, leisure, sport and travel and hair and beauty. 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 equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training, quality assurance, leisure, sport and travel and hair and beauty 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).

West Herts College Government Training, previously known as West Herts Training Consortium, provides training in a range of occupational areas. At the time of the original inspection, there was good off-the-job training in veterinary nursing, but training in the workplace was not planned. In engineering, work-based assessment was good and the key skills training was fully integrated into the motor vehicle training programme. Workplace assessment was good in business administration, but retention and achievement rates were low. There are good off-the-job training facilities in hospitality, but training in the workplace is unstructured. At reinspection, resources are excellent for training in sport and recreation, with well-planned workplace training. Retention and achievement rates have improved on the hairdressing training programmes. Training is good in care with thorough and effective assessments. Training is also good in printing and foundation for work, although results from the initial assessment process are not consistently used to establish individual learning plans in foundation for work. West Herts College Government Training now actively promotes equality of opportunity and has updated its equal opportunities policy. Learners receive good additional learning support and thorough initial assessments. There is a lack of employer involvement during progress reviews. At the time of the original inspection, the management of subcontractors was inadequate. The organisation now has service level agreements with all subcontracted providers, although the monitoring of these agreements has only recently been implemented. During the original inspection, data were not used during strategic planning. Some improvements have now been achieved by managers analysing data, although both the analysis and use of data is still not sufficient to help in decision-making. Following the original inspection, the training provider has started to integrate the quality assurance arrangements already in place at the college. The monitoring of

assessment and internal verification has improved, although there is no quality assurance of training in the workplace.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	3
Engineering	3
Business administration	3
Leisure, sport & travel	4
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	4
Health, care & public services	2
Media & design	2
Foundation for work	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Hair & beauty	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of off-the-job training in engineering and printing
- ◆ high retention rates in engineering
- ◆ good use of workplace evidence in business administration
- ◆ good level of NVQ achievements in hair and beauty
- ◆ accurate and thorough assessment in care
- ◆ highly appropriate initial assessment in foundation for work

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of data in making management decisions
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ slow progress towards framework completion in leisure, sport and travel
- ◆ no quality assurance of training in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient employer involvement during progress reviews

INTRODUCTION

1. West Herts College Government Training (previously known as West Herts Training Consortium) is part of West Herts College, a large provider of further and higher education. The college has four training sites. There are three in Watford and one in Hemel Hempstead. West Herts College Government Training provides training programmes in agriculture, engineering, business administration, retailing and customer service, leisure, sports and travel, hospitality, hair and beauty, health, care and public services, media and design and foundation for work. At the time of the original inspection, the occupational area of retailing and customer service was not inspected due to the low number of learners. All the training for veterinary nursing and leisure, sport and travel is subcontracted. Other further education colleges in the area are used to provide training if required, usually to ease travel arrangements for learners attending off-the-job training. The West Herts College has various sources of income. About 62 per cent of its annual earnings is from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). At the time of the original inspection, contracts with Hertfordshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and North West London TEC provided 4.4 per cent of its funding. At the time of reinspection, funding is now provided by Hertfordshire LSC.

2. During the original inspection, the consortium had 384 learners in work-based training programmes. Of these, 148 were modern apprentices, 144 were national trainees, 82 were on other work-based training programmes for young people, and 10 learners were on work-based training programmes for adults. There were also 12 New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. At the time of reinspection, there are 278 learners in work-based training and no New Deal clients. Of these, 93 are advanced modern apprentices, 151 are foundation modern apprentices, and the rest are completing other NVQ training programmes. The unemployment rate in Hertfordshire in May 2000 was 1.5 per cent. This was lower than the rate for the eastern region of 2.6 per cent, and the national rate of 3.8 per cent. By the time of reinspection, the unemployment rate in Hertfordshire was 1.2 per cent. This was lower than the rate for the eastern region at 2 per cent and the national average of 3 per cent. In 1998 in Hertfordshire, 81 per cent of school pupils completing year 11 stayed on in full-time education and training. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 54.9 per cent in Hertfordshire and 49 per cent in the northwest London TEC area, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above was 55.4 per cent in Hertfordshire, compared to the national average of 49.2 per cent. According to the 1991 census figures, the minority ethnic population in the county makes up 4 per cent of the local population and in Watford this rises to 9.9 per cent. The main industries in the area are the service industries, distribution, hotels and restaurants, banking, finance and insurance and public administration, education and health.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. West Herts Training Consortium produced its first self-assessment report for the original inspection in February 2000. For reinspection, West Herts College Government Training produced a revised self-assessment report during May 2001. This report was in effect an updated action plan and did not identify new strengths and weaknesses. Subcontractors were asked to contribute to the original self-assessment process through a series of questionnaires. Learners were not involved in the original self-assessment process, although comments from learners' questionnaires were used to inform the revised self-assessment action plan. All areas of the college were consulted and the director and manager of the organisation compiled both reports. At the original inspection, the self-assessment report was accurate for the occupational areas of hospitality, health, care and public services, media and design, and foundation for work. The consortium had given more than one grade for engineering and business administration, but the average of these was the same as the single grade given by inspectors. Further weaknesses identified by inspectors resulted in lower grades being awarded for agriculture, leisure, sport and travel, hair and beauty, equal opportunities, learner support, management of training and quality assurance. At reinspection, the grades awarded by inspectors were higher than those given in the self-assessment report for hair and beauty and learner support.

4. During the original inspection a team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 38 days at West Herts Training Consortium. They interviewed 150 learners, visited 50 employers and interviewed 37 employers' staff. They visited five subcontractors and interviewed 55 members of staff from the college and the consortium. The training consortium provided a comprehensive range of paperwork including learners' portfolios of evidence, assessment records and internal and external verification reports for inspectors to examine. Inspectors observed and graded 11 formal sessions of training as given in the table below.

5. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at West Herts College Government Training in July 2001. Inspectors interviewed 33 learners and 13 work-based supervisors and employers, which included some learners and supervisors from occupational areas not being reinspected. Twenty-five interviews were carried out with training provider staff and 20 work placements and one subcontractor were visited. Inspectors studied various documents including learners' portfolios of evidence, individual learning plans, minutes of meetings, quality assurance documents, policies and procedures, and internal and external verification reports. Reviews and assessments were observed, although no training sessions were observed and graded during reinspection.

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Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture	0	0	1	0	0	1
Engineering	0	2	1	0	0	3
Business administration	0	1	1	0	0	2
Hair & beauty	0	0	1	0	0	1
Health, care & public services	0	2	0	0	0	2
Foundation for work	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total	0	6	5	0	0	11

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (Veterinary nursing)

Grade 3

6. There are 43 trainees all training to become registered veterinary nurses. They are all on work-based training programmes for young people. All are employed at veterinary practices which are approved by the awarding body to be training and assessment centres for veterinary nursing. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 or level 3 in veterinary nursing. Those trainees who do not have the necessary GCSE entry qualifications required by the British Veterinary Nursing Association are working towards a pre-entry qualification. The training programme runs for two or three years according to the entry qualifications of the trainee. All trainees attend off-the-job training provided by a subcontractor. The subcontractor provides veterinary nursing training at three sites. These are at Potters Bar in North London, Godmanchester near Huntingdon and in Leeds. Ninety-five per cent of the consortium's trainees attend off-the-job training at Potters Bar, and the remainder go to Godmanchester. All off-the-job trainers are qualified veterinary nurses and either hold, or are working towards, qualifications in training and assessment. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses with which inspectors agreed. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that identified in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good guidance notes developed for new NVQ
- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ well-monitored progression within training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak monitoring of on-the-job training
- ◆ slow implementation of internal verification
- ◆ poor review process
- ◆ few employers conform to training requirements

7. The NVQ in veterinary nursing came into existence in January 1999. The examination requirements of the previous awards have still been retained. In addition, trainees are now required to complete a portfolio of practice-based assessment. The subcontractor has devised comprehensive guidance notes to support trainees in the completion of the portfolios. These have now been published as a book, which is available for all veterinary nursing trainees. The subcontractor has very strong links with the profession and has been prominent in the development of the new veterinary nursing training scheme. It has arranged training days for the principals of veterinary practices and head nurses. This has

included developing their understanding of NVQ requirements and giving an introduction to assessor training.

8. All trainees and every veterinary practice receive a timetable for off-the-job training. There are clear schemes of work for all sessions. Trainees' attendance and punctuality is good. There is a comprehensive range of books and videos available which are used by trainees. Off-the-job trainers are fully conversant with the changes in the training programme. They encourage trainees to relate their work experiences to the subject being taught. Assignments are set which are directly related to the order of work in the portfolio. These are closely monitored by off-the-job trainers to ensure that trainees are achieving. The trainers give detailed feedback to the trainees. The subcontractor keeps detailed records of trainees' progress and the work the trainee needs to complete in order to achieve the next intermediate target. The subcontractor reviews trainees' progress during tutorials at the end of the off-the-job training day. When trainees do not achieve the pre-entry qualifications or levels of the NVQ, they can study within five comprehensive, intense short courses to retry achieving the qualification. Trainees are able to progress well through the different stages. The achievement rate for the examination section is 66 per cent, which is 14 per cent above the national average. Where trainees do not have the necessary entrance qualifications, they are encouraged to attend the pre-entry programme. All trainees who successfully complete this progress to level 2 of the NVQ.

9. Although there are very clear guidelines issued by the awarding body about the requirements of the training programme, few of the employers are aware of, or conform to, the requirements. Trainees are not given regular time for private study at work. There is no structure to the training they receive at work. Trainees do not receive at least three hours each week of tutorials. Two trainees have to attend off-the-job training on their days off. Few trainees receive copies of the occupational standards they have to achieve to complete their NVQs. Those who do only do so when the head nurse realises the omission. There is a lack of support in the workplace. In 1998-99, 48 per cent of trainees left the programme early. Trainees' retention rate has improved recently and only 6 per cent of trainees have left early in the current year.

10. The subcontractor submits an end of term report to the training consortium and each employer. The training consortium also carries out a review with trainees every three months, in line with the TEC contract. Employers are rarely involved in these reviews. The reviews are treated in isolation, with no cross-referencing or use of the other's review by either the consortium or the subcontractor. The consortium does not know where trainees are with regard to NVQ unit progression, nor does the employer. Trainees only receive a copy of the end of term report which is based on their examination results. There is no action-planning involving the off-the-job trainer, the employer, the trainee and training consortium to help the trainee progress through the programme.

11. The awarding body for this new NVQ requires internal verification to be

carried out by either a qualified veterinary surgeon or a listed veterinary nurse. Few of the employers' staff supervising trainees have achieved assessor or internal verifiers' qualifications. To overcome this problem, the awarding body has given responsibility to its external verifier to verify all the portfolios which are completed at each level. This is far from ideal as the internal verification process should be able to monitor a sample of assessments and provide feedback to assessors and trainees throughout the training process.

Engineering

Grade 3

12. There are 144 young people taking engineering following a range of programmes as detailed in the table below. In addition, there are two work-based learning for adults trainees and five New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option taking qualifications in body repair. Those trainees working with vehicles are referred to as motor-vehicle trainees, and all other trainees are referred to as engineering trainees. All trainees are employed. There are 37 employers with trainees at the consortium, 30 which have motor-vehicle trainees and seven which have trainees in the rest of the engineering programmes at the consortium. Off-the-job training is conducted on one or more of the three campuses. Trainees attend West Herts College's engineering department one day a week during term time to gain the related theoretical knowledge to complement the on-the-job training. Reviews are carried out every three months in line with the TEC's contractual requirements. In motor-vehicle programmes, occupationally qualified college assessors carry out all assessments. In engineering, most of the level 3 assessments are carried out by subcontracted qualified assessors. Other level 2 assessments are carried out by qualified college staff. There is one company which has its own on-the-job qualified assessor and another which has a member of staff training to be an assessor. There are adequate learning resources throughout engineering and for most of the motor-vehicle programmes.

13. Over the past four years, recruitment for modern apprentices and national trainees on motor-vehicle mechanical and electrical systems programmes has steadily increased. For the other motor-vehicle trade-based training in body repair, maintenance and valeting, the trend has shown a decrease. Of all trainees starting programmes, 36 per cent leave early. For those completing their programmes, there has been low achievement, below the national average for the past four years in motor vehicle. Trainees achieve NVQs, but do not always complete the programme framework. Achievement has been gradually improving over the past three years. In other engineering areas, recruitment has declined but is now showing an upward trend. Retention rates are high, with 93 per cent of those starting staying to complete their programmes, but again achievement rates for those completing their programmes are low, although they have been improving over the past three years. The self-assessment report identified strengths which inspectors found to be no more than normal practice and it failed to identify the strengths and weaknesses which inspectors found. The self-assessment report

separately graded motor vehicle, engineering and information technology programmes. The grade awarded for engineering as a whole by inspectors is the same as the average grade given by the consortium for its three defined areas.

Table 1

	Modern apprentice	National trainee	Other youth training	Total
Electronics servicing	0	0	5	5
Engineering	7	0	0	7
Engineering manufacture	0	3	0	3
Engineering production	6	0	0	6
Electrical and electronics servicing	2	0	2	4
Installing and commissioning electrical systems and equipment	2	0	0	2
Installing information technology components	0	7	0	7
Engineering foundation	8	5	0	13
Motor vehicle mechanical and electrical systems	32	33	1	66
Vehicle body repair	27	2	0	29
Vehicle maintenance			1	1
Vehicle valeting			1	1
Total	82	50	10	144

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of off-the-job-training
- ◆ good workplace assessments in motor vehicle
- ◆ integration of good key skills in motor-vehicle training
- ◆ rigorous monitoring and cross-referencing of evidence in motor vehicle
- ◆ trainees' high retention rates
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' successes in motor vehicle

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ many missed opportunities for gathering evidence in engineering
- ◆ late introduction of key skills for some engineering trainees
- ◆ poor assessment process in some areas of engineering
- ◆ no information technology workplace assessments

- ◆ limited availability of resources in motor-vehicle body workshop
- ◆ lack of internal verification planning in motor vehicle

14. Engineering trainees attend the college for one day each week during term time. The training they receive is of a high standard. Trainees are enthusiastic and praise the standards of training. Employers also appreciate the high standard of training. Tuition is often on an individual basis or in small groups in order to ensure that trainees have a good knowledge of the concept being taught. The handouts and workbooks are good. They are detailed and clear in their explanation. At some employers, there are good examples of planned on-the-job training. Clients use digital cameras in gathering evidence. The portfolios have been word processed by the trainees, to develop their information technology skills. Most portfolios are of a good standard.

15. All assessment for work-based motor-vehicle trainees is carried out in the workplace by industrially qualified and experienced motor-vehicle technicians or skilled tradespeople. Assessment is by observation, or by collecting job cards and witness testimony. The college motor-vehicle staff hold a sample of all witnesses' signatures. In addition, a number of the college's motor-vehicle staff, who are qualified assessors, visit employers' premises once each college term to carry out assessments in the workplace. A qualified assessor assesses each motor-vehicle trainee in the workplace once every three months. Evidence obtained in the workplace, signed by a qualified motor-vehicle tradesperson is transferred to the trainee's portfolio. Portfolios are well presented and maintained, containing a variety of evidence. The assessment details are recorded in the trainee's portfolio and signed by a qualified assessor. Accreditation is awarded at the completion of each unit. Achievements are cross-referenced to other relevant units in the portfolio, which is retained by the trainee. The motor-vehicle staff at the college have a duplicate copy of all trainees' assessment records. Portfolio-building workshops are included in the off-the-job training sessions. Constant reviews and monitoring are carried out in these sessions on a one-to-one basis.

16. Key skills for all motor-vehicle trainees are fully integrated into the motor-vehicle studies programmes. Six assignments are set for each trainee which are directly related to the motor-vehicle industry. These assignments are based on current industrial practices. They include current issues concerning the transport industry. Trainees are aware of the key skills elements and are knowledgeable about the requirements expected of them to achieve their intended goals. A college tutor has been assigned to the motor-vehicle section for the key skills element of training. A member of staff joins the portfolio-building workshop sessions and integrates key skills into the motor-vehicle studies. Trainees are able to obtain one-to-one tuition on key skills and additional learning needs if they are experiencing problems. This system is fully developed and used in the motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical section. It is now being developed in the body repair and paint finishing section of the department as the motor-vehicle section shares good practice.

17. In October of each year, the motor-vehicle section organises a presentation evening to celebrate the success of all work-based trainees, and to award certificates and prizes to selected trainees. A guest speaker, who presents the awards, is invited together with parents, friends, the college principal, college staff and staff from the training consortium. The event is well attended. Reports and photographs are included in the local newspaper and on college bulletin boards. The guest speaker is normally a prominent person from the industry who is closely associated with work-based training. Each year, the road transport engineers for heavy vehicles provide an award for the best trainee in the London area. For two consecutive years a trainee from West Herts Training Consortium has won this award. Both trainees have been on modern apprenticeship programmes at NVQ level 3 in motor-vehicle studies.

18. Sixteen trainees taking NVQs at level 3 in engineering have missed many opportunities for gathering evidence in the workplace. Registration of some level 3 engineering trainees has been delayed and no qualified assessor has been available to assess them. This has recently been rectified, and a part-time qualified assessor has been appointed. Trainees are now receiving assistance in gathering evidence. In some cases, trainees scheduled to finish this summer have only recently started gathering level 3 evidence and no assessments have been carried out. These trainees have only a few months to complete what would normally take two years. They are also required to undertake some level 2 assessments, which were not completed when they were taking the NVQ at level 2.

19. Trainees have a poor knowledge of assessment procedures, and only a small range of assessment methods is used. Most level 3 NVQ evidence being collected consists of a daily list of work undertaken by the trainee which has rarely been assessed. Some trainees taking NVQs at level 3 in engineering have not begun training in key skills, even in their final year. Many aspects of the trainees' work has been left to the end of the programme. Reviews of progress have been carried out in compliance with contract requirements but have not focused on the NVQ achievement or set intermediate targets for trainees. Many trainees are not aware of what programme they are following. Individual training plans are not routinely updated. In some cases, they do not give an accurate picture of the trainees' progress and targets. Internal verification within the college is good, but there is no internal verification system or assessment planning arranged for the trainees taking NVQs at level 3 in engineering who have been assigned to a subcontracted assessor. Trainees undertaking NVQs in installing information technology components are not being assessed in the workplace, and all of their assessments are being carried out off the job.

20. Motor-vehicle college staff are well qualified and experienced. All staff are qualified assessors but only one member of motor-vehicle staff holds the internal verifiers' award. Four members of staff are working towards the internal verifiers' award and are expected to achieve it in the near future. Currently, the internal verification process is not planned. The samples for internal verification do not

cover the complete range of assessment evidence. Internal verification is based on the inspection of trainees' portfolios. The samples are dated and signed when verified. Internal verification of assessors, assessments and tests on off-the-job theory training does not occur.

21. Most resources within the motor-vehicle section are good and suitable for NVQ training. In the body-repair and paint-finishing section of the motor-vehicle department, however, resources are below standard. The resources do not meet with current industrial standards and consumable materials are in short supply. Motor-vehicle body-repair and paint-finishing NVQ courses are carried out at the William Street campus of West Herts College. The site buildings are old and have been subjected to vandalism with thefts from motor-vehicle resources. The trainees taking NVQs at level 3 on this programme have had their off-the-job training reduced to one half day each week. The remaining half day is devoted to private study in portfolio building, visiting local employers or, in some cases, returning to work.

Business administration

Grade 3

22. There are 24 trainees on business administration training programmes. There are six modern apprentices, 17 national trainees and one trainee on a work-based learning for adults programme. There are also three New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. One trainee is working towards an administration NVQ at level 1, 12 are taking NVQs at level 2 and three at level 3. Two trainees are working towards NVQs in accounting at level 3 and four at level 2. There is one trainee taking an NVQ at level 2 in operating information technology and one trainee working towards an NVQ at level 2 in using information technology. Trainees learn about the business administration training programmes through the careers service and careers conventions, or through job centres or word of mouth. Each applicant to the training is given a basic skills test unless their abilities are already known to the college from an earlier course. The trainees find work placements through the training organisers employed by the consortium, by themselves or through contacting employers who have recently employed a young person in work-based training. Some trainees undertake extra qualifications, build their portfolios or do other training by one-day or half-day attendance at the college on release from the workplace. Induction is given individually at the college by the training organiser responsible for the trainee. Peripatetic assessors visit trainees in the workplace every two or three weeks for assessment of workplace evidence and questioning to establish trainees' knowledge and understanding. The training organiser visits trainees every 12 weeks to conduct a review of their progress. This meeting usually includes the employer. Accounts trainees on NVQs at level 2 and 3 attend college on day release or on one evening each week during term time. College sessions cease for 12 weeks during the college holidays. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths which inspectors found to be no more than normal practice

and inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report separated the grades for business administration and accounts giving one a grade 2 and one a grade 3. Only one overall grade was awarded by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of workplace evidence in administration
- ◆ clear monitoring of NVQ unit achievement
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ good staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for key skills achievement
- ◆ low retention and achievement levels in administration
- ◆ poor correlation between on- and off-the-job training for accounts
- ◆ few workplace assessments for accounts trainees

23. Within the last six months, the consortium has adopted a system of peripatetic work-based assessment for administration programmes. This has resulted in good portfolios containing evidence obtained from the trainees' working environment, including good use of photographic evidence. Off-the-job training changed in 1999 from one day a week in college, when all trainees followed the same formally taught course, to one half day a fortnight for some trainees. Off-the-job training now satisfies trainees' individual support needs for portfolio building or enhancing their technical skills. This has improved the attitude and achievement of trainees. Good-quality resources have been developed in-house to help trainees to understand the requirements of their NVQs and accumulate suitable evidence. The resources use straightforward language and avoid jargon. Key skills material has been identified but not yet used by work-based trainees. Regular meetings of staff encourage the sharing of good practice. The trainees understand and appreciate the roles of the various members of staff and are well supported by them. A clear and effective system has been developed to record trainees' achievement of units of their NVQs. This enables trainees' progress to be monitored. Trainees' progress is discussed at meetings of assessors and managers. Internal verification is thorough. The records are available centrally to all staff. Trainees have a clear record of their unit achievement in their portfolios. The training organisers visit trainees every 12 weeks but are available to trainees and employers at any time if problems occur. Some staff are taking NVQs at level 3 in business administration in order to better support trainees. They are also taking advanced information technology qualifications to keep their knowledge up to date. Following the recent need for more workplace assessment several staff are working towards assessor and internal verifier qualifications.

24. New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option have good training and additional support. They have good work-experience opportunities

while on day-release from college. They are improving their skills and employability. In 1999-2000, 46 per cent of clients completed their individual training plan, 46 per cent left the programme early without any qualifications, and 8 per cent left early to take up employment.

25. Opportunities are missed to accredit key skills achievement. Trainees collect good evidence from their workplaces for their business administration portfolios but they are not guided to cross-reference this to the key skills units as they progress. There is poor understanding among many trainees of their target qualification and their planned achievement date. One modern apprentice, who was on a business administration programme, was unaware that she was also taking a customer service qualification. Many trainees are unaware of the existence of their individual training plan. The reviews conducted by training organisers vary in format and content. The information contained in them is bland and does not help trainees to understand their progression through the qualification.

26. There have been low levels of retention and achievement over the last two years among national trainees and over the last three years among modern apprentices. In 1999-2000, 41 per cent of national trainees beginning programmes have already left without qualifications. Accounts trainees have achieved well above the national average in their external examinations, but other parts of the NVQ are not satisfactory.

27. A quarter of business administration trainees are taking accounts. Few assessments are conducted in the workplace. An assessor goes into the workplace to assess the health and safety unit of the NVQ, but none of the trainees' accounts work is assessed there. A member of the college's staff has paid a visit to a trainee in the workplace, but as the tutor has not achieved the assessor units he was unable to assess the trainee's competence. There is a poor correlation between the off-the-job training for accounts trainees with the fixed syllabus of the college course. Trainees find few connections between the theory they learn at college and their day-to-day work.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 3

28. At reinspection, there are 20 learners working towards sport and recreation NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in operational services and operations and development. There are 12 advanced modern apprentices and eight foundation modern apprentices. All learners are employed at local leisure centres and swimming pools. Training and assessment have been subcontracted to a local training provider since December 1998. There are four assessors who visit learners in the workplace each month and more frequently if required. Learners' progress reviews are carried out every three months by training organisers. Learners are able to acquire additional qualifications, such as first aid, life guard training and coaching

awards, through their employers.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ unplanned training in the workplace
- ◆ no key skills development or assessment
- ◆ weak monitoring of trainees' progress

29. All of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection have been rectified and the strengths improved. Training in the workplace is now planned well and detailed records of training are kept up to date. Key skills training and its integration into the training programme has only recently begun and it is too early to assess the impact of this on learners' progress. The monitoring of learners' progress has improved and has resulted in higher achievement rates. The revised self-assessment report did not identify any new strengths or weaknesses, instead concentrating on the improvements made following the original inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned workplace training
- ◆ wide range of additional qualifications undertaken and achieved
- ◆ good portfolios of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient understanding of modern apprenticeship frameworks

30. Workplace training is planned and recorded well. Each has training checklists for all aspects of the learners' job role. Detailed records of training are kept up to date. In addition to the routine operational training which takes place, learners undertake further training, for example, learning to deal with abusive customers and how to respond to other situations and issues which arise in the workplace. Evidence of this training is used for NVQ achievement. Resources are of a high standard, with the latest books, magazines and handouts being used. Learners who demonstrate competence at work are often promoted. They are encouraged to become involved in various activities in order to cover the full NVQ requirements. Prior learning and achievement is accredited at induction during an interview with the subcontractor. This ensures that any key skills, formal qualifications and coaching awards are included in the learners' individual learning plans and the portfolios of evidence.

31. All learners have access to a wide range of additional qualifications. Learners who bring existing sports and recreation qualifications, which meet the requirements of the framework to their training programmes, are able to take additional qualifications. Most learners are able to achieve up to two qualifications more than the minimum framework requirements. Additional qualifications include those in pool maintenance and life guard training. These qualifications

contribute to their professional development. An additional nationally recognised sports and recreation management award improves their prospects for promotion to supervisory job roles.

32. Learners' portfolios of evidence are good, with diverse evidence clearly cross-referenced to the NVQ units. Learners fully understand what evidence they should collect for their portfolios and complete a summary for each NVQ unit achieved. There is extensive use of assessment by observation and portfolios contain detailed observation reports. Most employers allow learners time during their working hours for portfolio-building and to prepare for assessor visits. Assessors have good technical experience which they update regularly by working in the industry. This helps them to provide additional advice and support to learners. All assessments take place on the job, using evidence available in the workplace wherever possible.

33. The subcontractor's training staff do not understand the apprenticeship frameworks sufficiently. Most staff interviewed were not aware of the organisational and industry awareness components of the framework, or the need for learners to generate relevant evidence for these. Learners are unaware that they need to carry out additional work to complete their frameworks. Individual learning plans do not clearly identify all relevant components of the apprenticeship framework.

34. Underdeveloped key skills training and insufficient NVQ assessors has resulted in learners' poor progress. No learner has achieved either the foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship framework in full since 1998-99. Retention rates, however, are satisfactory. Of those learners who started their training programmes in 1998-99, 56 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices and 53 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices are still in training. The majority of learners who leave early achieve some NVQs. Some learners have been unable to complete their training programmes because their work could not be assessed. Key skills training has only recently been introduced into the training programme but in the past three months, additional assessors have been recruited for this purpose. Learners are now beginning to progress with their key skills training.

Hospitality

Grade 3

35. There are currently nine trainees: one woman and eight men. All but one of the trainees are employed in a range of establishments including hotels, pubs and hospitals. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups. About 50 per cent of trainees complete their training plans. Trainees' are being trained at foundation level and progress to NVQs at level 3. There is one trainee on another work-based training programme for young people, six national trainees, one modern apprentice doing an NVQ at level 3 and one trainee on a work-based learning for adults programme doing an NVQ at level 1. The college currently uses two awarding bodies but this will shortly be reduced to one. Trainees attend college on day-release one-day each week during term time and attend classes with other full-time

students. Trainees are offered additional support in literacy and numeracy. They are visited in the workplace for review meetings. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses with which inspectors agreed, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job-training facilities
- ◆ good integration of learning support
- ◆ good progression between NVQ levels

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no planned on-the-job training
- ◆ no workplace assessment

36. Trainees attend off-the-job training at the college. There are good training facilities. There are 10 training kitchens, a bakery, a brasserie and a restaurant. All these training areas are well equipped with modern facilities. There is a well-stocked library with relevant material for the hospitality industry. Well-qualified staff carry out the off-the-job training. All staff have recent industrial experience. The training includes examples of application in the workplace. Learning support is integrated into the training. Trainees are provided with help in reading, and with written work. Trainees with learning difficulties, including those with dyslexia, are provided with readers. One trainee with a hearing impairment has specialist equipment for use during off-the-job training. In most cases, trainees are supplied with a uniform by their employers but have to provide text-books and a knife kit themselves for the off-the-job training. The college's trainers assess and internally verify trainees' work. All staff involved in these processes are suitably qualified. Tracking sheets are used to monitor trainees' progress. Many trainees take the opportunity to gain additional qualifications including basic hygiene and health and safety training. There has been good progression for trainees. So far this year, seven trainees have progressed from foundation programmes to NVQs at level 2 and several others have progressed to level 1.

37. Training in the workplace happens when learning situations occur. There is no structure. Trainees and employers are vague about the use of evidence from the workplace in trainees' portfolios. Within the trainees' workplaces there are ample assessment opportunities. Some employers have little knowledge of the NVQ framework. Trainees often carry out advanced tasks, but there is no mechanism by which their competence can be used as evidence. There are no workplace assessments. Witness testimony is not used. All assessment is carried out off the job in the college. The college's kitchens are used to simulate a working environment for assessment. There are also few opportunities for assessment during off-the-job training. The quantity, quality and range of realistic work experience demonstrating trainees' competence are not used to help trainees to complete the units of their NVQs. While the variety of work placements is good,

the actual support trainees receive, and for the training process, is poor.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

38. There are currently 42 learners on hairdressing training programmes. Of these, two are advanced modern apprentices, 38 are foundation modern apprentices and two are on other work-based training programmes for young people, working towards NVQs at level 2. All learners are employed and attend the college for off-the-job training one day each week during term time. Learners can begin their off-the-job training at any time throughout the college year, the majority beginning in September. All learners carry out an initial basic skills assessment. At the original inspection there was only one work-based assessor. By the time of reinspection, there were seven work-based assessors. There are five college hairdressing staff, three of whom carry out work-based assessment. The college is recruiting an additional staff member to assess full-time in the workplace. Learners are allocated a training organiser who visits them at the college on a weekly basis and in the salons every eight to 12 weeks to carry out progress reviews. Training organisers are also responsible for interviewing prospective learners, arranging the details of employment with training in salons, counselling and pastoral support and careers and progression advice for learners.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some trainees on inappropriate programmes
- ◆ few assessment opportunities
- ◆ trainees' poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification procedures
- ◆ some invalid assessment
- ◆ no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ slow progress for most trainees

39. All of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection had been rectified at reinspection. Learners are now placed on appropriate training programmes. Assessments have improved and six more work-based assessors have been appointed. Retention and achievement rates have improved and are good. Internal verification is well planned and carried out regularly. Learners can attend their off-the-job training at times which suit both them and their employers. At reinspection, the self-assessment report, produced in May 2001, consisted of action points but did not identify the strengths and weakness identified by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of resources
- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training

- ◆ good level of NVQ achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some learners in achieving competence in key skills

40. The consortium finds jobs for all learners before they begin training. A wide range of salons provide employment for the learners. Careful consideration is given to matching learners and employers, each learner's career preferences are matched with the most suitable type of salon. All salons have up-to-date equipment. New procedures have been put in place since the original inspection to enable learners to attend a one-day skills test at the college during the summer. This includes basic and key skills and dexterity tests. The results of these tests are used to ensure that learners are placed on the correct training programmes and are given appropriate individual support. Learners who enrol during the college summer vacation are able to develop technical skills in the workplace and to undertake assessments towards their NVQs, before their off-the-job training begins in September. In the first year of the training programme, learners quickly develop new skills. They carry out advanced tasks competently, including cutting, applying colour, foils and perm winding. The college supplies learners with a high standard of tools and equipment for their off-the-job training, including rollers, perm rods, clippers and tongs. Personal equipment, such as scissors, brushes and combs, is purchased by the learner. The college's hairdressing salons are well-equipped and promote discounted hairdressing services to ensure that learners have an appropriate range of models to work on to meet their assessment needs. There are excellent displays of competition work carried out by learners at the college. The college's hairdressing staff encourage learners to take part in competitions and help them to develop the required technical skills. The training provider pays for the competition fees and any out-of-pocket expenses.

41. Off-the-job training is good, with learners attending their off-the-job training at times convenient to them and their employers. Training in the salons is well structured with a number of salons providing their own training programmes which complement the NVQs. Learner support by employers and staff in the workplace is good. Learners have a clear understanding of what is required to complete the full framework of training. There is a wide range of opportunities for learners to develop their skills and interests. Some have attended courses given by manufacturers of hairdressing products, as well as additional cutting courses. Learners are highly motivated and make good progress in learning practical skills. They assess their own progress by referring to monitoring sheets which are displayed at the college. Regular action-planning also takes place. Portfolios of evidence are presented clearly and contain a good variety of evidence.

42. Retention and achievement rates were poor for all the hairdressing training programmes at the original inspection, but have improved by the time of reinspection. Achievement rates for learners on other work-based training programmes in 1997-98 and 1998-99 were 18 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively. The retention rates were 19 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively. No

national trainees achieved a qualification in 1998-99 and 65 per cent left the training programme early. In the same year, 22 per cent of modern apprentices completed their training programme and 34 per cent achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. In 1999 each of the four trainees on other work-based training programmes achieved their NVQ at level 1 and one learner progressed to level 2. In 2000, one learner started an NVQ at level 2 and is still in training. The retention and achievement rates for other work-based training in 2000 are 100 per cent. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices is now 61 per cent. Ninety-four per cent achieved their NVQ at level 2 and 35 per cent have achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices is now 33 per cent. The achievement rate for level 3 NVQ and the completion of the full modern apprenticeship framework is now 100 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively.

43. Learners understand the key skills requirements for their training programme, but do not always understand why they have to do them. Communications key skills are incorporated well into the training programmes, with relevant assignments used to help this process and good collection of evidence for this aspect of key skills. Other areas of key skills, such as information technology and the application of number, are taught by staff in the college's training centre. The training does not relate directly to hairdressing and attendance is poor. This has slowed down learners' achievement of key skills targets.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

44. The consortium offers programmes in care and childcare at NVQ levels 2 and 3 for modern apprentices and national trainees. There are 40 trainees and clients: 30 are modern apprentices, seven are national trainees, one trainee is on another work-based training programme for young people and two are New Deal clients. Thirty-nine of the trainees and clients are employed and all are assessed in the workplace. There are eight trainees taking NVQs at level 2 and three at level 3 in care working in one private hospital and in a residential school for children and young people with epilepsy. Nine trainees taking NVQs at level 2 and 11 at level 3 in childcare work in day nurseries, nursery schools, and as nannies in private homes. The consortium subcontracts the off-the-job training sessions to the college. Trainees in childcare at level 2 attend the college two days each month. Level 3 trainees attend a weekly two-hour evening class. There is one male trainee in care, and no men taking childcare. One childcare trainee belongs to a minority ethnic group. The care trainees at the residential school attend training sessions at their workplace for three hours each week. Most work on a day shift, but one adult trainee at the school works on a pattern of four nights on and four nights off to suit her family responsibilities. The care trainees at the private hospital are taught individually by visiting college staff or join full-time students at the college in classes held at the college's campus. In addition, all trainees attend 10 or 12 three-hour sessions at the college for training in key skills. Some assessments for childcare and care trainees are carried out by assessors employed by the college

but, wherever possible, work-based assessors conduct assessments. There are six active work-based assessors in childcare, and seven in care. Nine college-based assessors visit workplaces to carry out assessments and to help trainees collect and organise written information in their portfolios. The consortium organises regular meetings for all assessors to share information about their trainees, and to standardise assessment procedures. The self-assessment report contains the strengths identified by inspectors, but did not include the weakness concerning retention. The grade given by inspectors is the same as that awarded in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ accurate and thorough assessment
- ◆ diverse off-the-job training
- ◆ good co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good progression by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient access to key skills learning resources for some trainees
- ◆ poor retention of trainees in childcare

45. Care and childcare trainees work in a wide range of good-quality workplaces, and attend off-the-job training sessions at different times. This suits the shift pattern of work and is appreciated by trainees and employers. Some trainees attend specially organised workshops at the college, some join classes of full-time college students at times which fit in with their work shifts, and some are taught individually by visiting tutors. College staff organise group training sessions every week for trainees working at the school for children and young people with epilepsy. School staff are strongly involved in the training and assessment, and work patterns are arranged so that trainees can attend. The quality of work experience is monitored by the consortium's staff. For example, they ensure that all trainees are employed and have appropriate access to off-the-job training opportunities. The consortium's staff have established effective links between on- and off-the job training. Teaching staff plan learning activities which draw upon the trainees' work experience and show the relevance of the training to their jobs. Some work-placement staff are actively involved in trainees' reviews. All help identify opportunities for assessment so that trainees can make good progress towards achieving a qualification. Assessors provide a high level of support for trainees by planning frequent assessments with trainees and providing instructive feedback on progress. Assessors' training is provided for workplace staff. Regular assessors' meetings are held to share information about trainees' progress. The assessments are collected into well-organised portfolios which are clearly cross-referenced to other pieces of written work, and to the national standards in care and childcare. The internal verification system is thorough. All units are verified and accredited as they are completed. The college's assessors are also qualified as internal verifiers. An internal verifier observes assessors to ensure that a fair

standard of assessment is maintained. Actions suggested by the external verifiers are acted upon promptly. External verifiers' reports are generally good. Trainees make good progress from one level of the qualification to another with many trainees converting from work-based training to modern apprenticeships. When they have completed their training, some gain promotion, some continue training to become assessors themselves, and others move into higher education. The number of trainees on care and childcare programmes who have achieved a qualification has risen from 44 per cent in 1998 to 65 per cent in 1999.

46. Twelve workshops in key skills are offered at one of the college sites. The trainees gather much of the required information from the workplace and from their completed NVQ assessments. Trainees show a good understanding of key skills. However, nine care trainees who work at the school for children and young people with epilepsy receive all their training, including the training in key skills, on the school campus. These nine trainees have insufficient access to computers to support the development of their key skills. Three computers are available for their use, but school business has priority. They are sometimes not available for trainees to use at a time when their shifts allow. In 1998-99, half of the childcare trainees left their programmes early without achieving a qualification. Retention is now improving.

Media & design

Grade 2

47. The consortium has 15 trainees working towards qualifications in machine printing. There are five modern apprentices, nine national trainees and one trainee on a work-based learning programme for adults. There is also one New Deal client. All trainees are working towards NVQ at levels 2 or 3 in machine printing, key skills training and taking an industry standard examination. Modern apprentices progress to NVQs at level 3. All trainees are employed in local print companies. Trainees spend one day a week during term time at the college for off-the-job training. Trainees are recruited onto the course throughout the year but cannot start off-the-job training until September when the academic year begins. The college provides practical skills training in machine printing and related activities, portfolio-building workshops, key skills training and lectures for the knowledge required for the final examination. There are no worked-based assessors. Qualified and occupationally experienced assessors from the college carry out all assessment in the workplace. Training organisers visit the trainees at least every 12 weeks to carry out workplace reviews of progress. In 1999, 30 per cent of trainees left the programme without gaining a qualification, 40 per cent left having completed their qualifications and 30 per cent remained in training. Most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were found by inspectors to represent no more than normal practice. Many weaknesses were also not identified. Other strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors resulted in the same grade being awarded as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ well-managed progression for trainees
- ◆ effective liaison between consortium staff and off-the-job trainers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding and implementation of key skills
- ◆ insufficiently current learning resources

48. The off-the-job training is broken down into modules, each of which is taught over a period of approximately 12 weeks. During this time, trainees spend the mornings learning the practical skills of machine printing and pre-press activities such as plate making. There are sufficient printing presses and other equipment to ensure that each trainee has adequate access to equipment. The afternoon is taken up with lectures to give trainees the knowledge in support of the morning's practical training. Portfolio-building workshops are held weekly. Trainees bring evidence from the workplace to the college so that tutors can assist with portfolio building. Key skills training and one-to-one tutorials for trainees who have particular issues for which they require specific help are also held in the afternoons.

49. At the end of each module, trainees undertake an examination and the NVQ unit is finally assessed. If a trainee fails the module examination, they are given help with revision through one-to-one learning support. An examination re-sit is available as soon as the trainee and tutor agree that the trainee is ready. On completion of all of the modules, the trainee gains a machine printing industry standard qualification and the NVQ. Where trainees wish to progress to level 3 and modern apprenticeships, their progress in the workplace and personal development is closely monitored. While working towards completion of the NVQ at level 2, tutors assess the suitability of the workplace to provide appropriate experience and evidence. Additionally, tutors assess the capability of the trainee to succeed at level 3. They also discuss the requirements of the NVQ at level 3 with the employer to ensure that the employer will support the trainee through the next stage of the programme. If the trainee has the desire and aptitude to progress but the full range of workplace evidence cannot be produced with the current employer, the college ensures that alternative arrangements are made for the trainee to complete. The consortium's staff, college tutors and assessors work closely together to monitor the effectiveness of off-the-job training, trainees' personal development and their learning in the workplace. There are regular meetings at which specific issues concerning individual trainees are discussed and remedial actions are identified. Tutors, assessors and the consortium's staff work closely to promote and market the printing courses. They identify new employers who may employ trainees and maintain contacts with existing employers. Minutes are taken of their meetings and actions clearly recorded and are implemented.

50. Key skills are partially integrated into the NVQ, but most trainees see key

skills as a separate qualification. They do not understand the connection between key skills and their workplace practices. Some evidence for key skills is taken from portfolio evidence. The trainees completing assignments generate other key skills evidence. The key skills assignments are not always related to the workplace. Trainees who started training in September 1999 do not fully understand what evidence they have to generate. Some verbal instruction is given, but this is not followed up with a written assessment plan which the trainees can keep and refer to.

51. Although resources are generally adequate, there has been little recent investment in up-to-date printing equipment which trainees may be using in the workplace. Consumable items such as printing plates are often reused many times, and the product which trainees achieve is often of a less than acceptable quality. Tutors and assessors see trainees every week at off-the-job training sessions and help them to integrate evidence generated in the workplace into their portfolios. Assessors are only able to visit trainees in the workplace once a term to assess their competence. Trainees are therefore only assessed three times in a year on their workplace performance.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

52. Basic employability training for adults and other work-based training for young people form the two main strands of training in foundation for work. There are 19 trainees, eight of whom are on a programme for those with additional learning needs. Two trainees are on work-based learning for adults programmes. The remaining 10 are on basic employability programmes learning life skills to achieve personal targets. The aim of the training is to prepare individuals for employment by offering work 'tasters' as well as classroom-based activities at the two vocational training centres in Watford. Most trainees undertake literacy and numeracy training which leads to the achievement of wordpower and numberpower qualifications. These are offered at both centres and form most of the in-house training. Training in job-search skills, confidence-building, personal effectiveness and social skills is also available.

53. All trainees have an initial interview, take a basic skills assessment test and have an induction to their course. Work-based learning for adults trainees are on the basic employability programme for 21 hours a week for a period of 20 weeks. Most of the trainees on work-based programmes for young people receive training for 20 hours a week and can remain on the programme for a year. Those who are under 18 years of age and have been identified by the careers service as having an additional learning need can undertake training for 16 hours a week for a period of 16 weeks. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors to those cited in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly appropriate initial assessment
- ◆ individualised training programmes
- ◆ well-resourced training
- ◆ trainees' high retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inflexible programme of wordpower and numberpower
- ◆ weak use of results of initial assessment
- ◆ some staff unqualified to give basic skills learning support

54. Before starting on the programme, all trainees are interviewed by the lead trainer from the vocational training centres. Each trainee's literacy and numeracy skills are also assessed using standardised national tests. Trainees may not complete their literacy and numeracy assessments at this time, owing to lack of competence or ability. Once on the scheme, staff undertake further detailed assessment of the trainee's literacy and numeracy levels by using a variety of different methods suited to the individual. These include college tests, trainees' self-assessment and interview techniques. Results from this assessment provide detailed information on the skills and knowledge the trainee needs to acquire, as well as clearly identifying their occupational interests and any additional training needs. Training needs are picked up throughout the programme. Both vocational training centres are open throughout the year. Trainees can start their training at any time. At the beginning of each week, staff provide each trainee with their own personalised workplan. The plan details the training to be undertaken during the week. Depending on the trainee, materials to be used for the training are contained within each of the trainee's files of work. On arrival at the centre, trainees access their own files and can begin working immediately. Trainees can also use other material and equipment if needed. Wherever possible, training is based on the trainee's occupational interests. All training sessions are run by more than one member of staff, allowing trainees to receive individual attention when necessary. Both vocational training centres have a wide range of appropriate equipment and materials. These are easily available for trainees to obtain without having to ask the trainer. The one vocational training centre has a dedicated computer room, which is available at all times for foundation for work trainees. A smaller number of computers are available at the other vocational training centre. The first vocational training centre also has a kitchen as part of the main training room. The kitchen is used by the trainees and trainers as a learning resource. For example, trainees practise their reading and numeracy skills through cooking by following recipes, weighing and measuring.

55. There are high retention and achievement rates among trainees on both adult and youth programmes. During 1999-2000, retention rates on all the youth training programmes averaged 86 per cent, and on adult programmes, this was 83 per cent. Achievement rates are also high. On adult programmes last year, 93 per cent of

trainees achieved their learning goals and on youth programmes, 63 per cent achieved their targets.

56. Although initial assessment is thorough and in-depth, the findings are not recorded on the individual's training plan. The details are not referred to during reviews. There is no structured way of ensuring that the initially identified training needs have been met. Although the training to be undertaken is recorded on the trainee's weekly workplans, there is no overall system to check how these relate to the learning needs identified at the initial assessment or whether the work plans have been completed without going through the weekly record sheets.

57. No use is made of the information obtained at initial assessment to prioritise the order in which wordpower or numberpower might be achieved. All trainees start with unit one and work through each element in sequence before moving on to unit two. Most of the wordpower and numberpower training is given by the use of worksheets and little use is made of naturally occurring evidence, either at the training centre or when trainees are on work 'tasters'. The use of worksheets for practise and assessment does not suit the learning styles of some trainees. A few of the worksheets are poorly photocopied. In addition, some trainees working on their number skills find reading the instructions on the worksheets awkward because the words are too difficult for their reading ability.

58. Some staff giving literacy and numeracy training are not qualified to do this. Currently, just over half of the trainees are working towards gaining a basic skills qualification in literacy or numeracy. In addition, most of the other trainees currently on the programme are receiving some help above the level of basic skills with their English or maths.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

59. West Herts College Government Training staff share the responsibility for equality of opportunity. The college's equal opportunities committee meets each term. All staff at the college and the learners receive equal opportunities information during their inductions. The handbook given to learners includes a copy of the equal opportunities statement, which is a summary of the policy. Subcontractors receive a copy of the college's equal opportunities policy. All employers involved with work-based learners are asked, at the beginning of the training, to abide by the college's equal opportunities policy. The consortium collects data on ethnicity, gender and disability from prospective learners' application forms. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is 6.3 per cent.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little effort to encourage under-represented groups into training

- ◆ out-of-date equal opportunities policy
- ◆ some disregard of statements within equal opportunities policy and college student charter
- ◆ no representation of consortium team on college equal opportunities committee
- ◆ little analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities practices among employers or trainees

60. Most of the weaknesses from the original inspection have been rectified, but some actions have yet to have any effect on the training provision. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups has improved and is now 6.3 per cent. The equal opportunities policy is now up to date. The training provider is now represented on the college's equal opportunities committee. Equal opportunities data is analysed and discussed at staff meetings. The college has a strategic plan to promote and implement equality of opportunity, but there is no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Inspectors identified new strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of equal opportunities data
- ◆ good action to promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ effective participation with external partners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no detailed equal opportunities plan for work-based training
- ◆ ineffective planning of recruitment of some under-represented groups
- ◆ poor awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees

61. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups in work-based training has increased significantly. Following the original inspection, a target was set to increase the intake of learners from these groups to 4 per cent. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is now 6.3 per cent. Targets are monitored monthly through staff meetings and analysis of the data collected about learners' ethnic backgrounds, gender and disabilities. Local data and statistics are also used at these meetings. The staff have visited local schools with a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A local council representative was invited to attend a staff meeting to discuss community issues relating to minority ethnic representation.

62. The learner's handbook reflects the high priorities given to the promotion and observance of equal opportunities within the college. There is a good procedure for checking that the equal opportunities policy and grievance procedures have been covered during the induction. There is a detailed and effective induction

process for all staff, which includes induction on the legislative requirements of equal opportunities. A comprehensive equal opportunities training programme is available to all staff, who receive regular updating of training. Following the original inspection, the training provider is now represented by a member of staff on the college's equal opportunities committee. Equality of opportunity is an agenda item at all staff and management meetings and action points are clearly minuted. There is a comprehensive and up-to-date equal opportunities policy for all staff and learners. The college has a comprehensive strategic plan to promote and carry out equality of opportunity, but this does not yet extend fully to their work-based training provision. All literature now includes an 'inclusion statement' and the student charter is given to all learners. Marketing information for potential learners now includes images and text which demonstrate participation by both men and women in traditionally single sex occupations such as engineering.

63. Links made with external organisations have helped staff to broaden their knowledge of equal opportunities issues. One member of staff is a member of the LSC providers' equal opportunities committee, which aims to establish a code of practice which promotes and ensures equality of opportunity for all learners. The training provider is also represented on another local initiative, which aims to ensure the availability of training and employment for people with disabilities. The training provider recently took part in a local research project investigating how training providers market their services to minority ethnic learners and employers.

64. There is no detailed equal opportunities plan for work-based training. Occupational gender stereotypes are apparent in some training programmes. For example, learners in engineering and motor vehicle are mainly men and most learners in hairdressing and veterinary nursing are women. The targets for widening participation on the training programmes have concentrated on improving access to training for those from minority ethnic groups. The training provider has no strategic plan to identify other groups in the community who are often excluded from work-based training. These include single parents and refugees.

65. Although equality of opportunity is part of the induction, learners have a poor awareness of equal opportunities issues. A checklist is used to ensure that equal opportunities has been taught, but learners' understanding of the issues is not monitored. Equal opportunities is not reinforced throughout the training programme. There are plans to use appropriate video training during induction but this does not yet take place. Most learners have little understanding of issues such as bullying or harassment. Equal opportunities issues are discussed during progress reviews and if issues are identified they are dealt with quickly, but not always recorded fully.

Trainee support

Grade 2

66. Potential learners are referred to the college by their employers, the careers service or on the advice of family and friends. Learners who are not already employed have an initial interview to determine their career aspirations and abilities. The training provider's staff help learners to find suitable employment with local companies if they are not already employed. Induction for each learner is carried out in the employer's premises, with a further induction to the off-the-job training on the learner's first day at college. All learners carry out various initial assessments. If appropriate, they are required to take a basic skills test on entry or at their interview to determine the level of any additional training in literacy and numeracy. Key skills are also tested and the results are included in the individual learning plans. The training provider's staff carry out progress reviews in the workplace every 13 weeks. All learners are assigned a personal training organiser.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some inaccurate interpretation of basic skills testing
- ◆ little systematic accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ ineffective use of individual training plans
- ◆ some ineffective reviews

67. All of the weaknesses identified in the original inspection have been rectified. Initial assessments of basic and key skills are good and learners' previous achievements are accredited on individual learning plans. These plans are used well and include learners' additional learning needs. There are well-recorded, regular progress reviews. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive initial assessments
- ◆ effective response to individual learning needs
- ◆ wide-ranging pastoral support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of employer involvement during progress reviews

68. The initial assessment of learners is well planned and ensures that any additional learning support required is identified early in the training programme and recorded on learners' individual learning plans. If the test indicates potential learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, then a further assessment is arranged with a member of staff with specialist skills. Key skills are also assessed before a decision is made on the most suitable training programme. Learners receive further

training and support either individually or as a group. In some areas, learners carry out a vocationally relevant assessment which is administered by vocationally qualified tutors to ensure that learners have the necessary aptitude for their chosen training programme. If necessary, additional tuition is given to learners who are identified as having additional learning needs. Some aspects of initial assessment are new and the pilot stage has only recently been completed.

69. Learners are allocated a personal training organiser who is responsible for all aspects of individual learner support. They carry out quarterly progress reviews in the workplace, initial assessments and give learners advice and guidance on career progression. The organisers also liaise, on behalf of the learners, with college tutors, assessors, employers, and outside agencies such as the careers service. Life Skills training is available for those learners who require intensive help with their learning, and social or personal development before starting their training programme. Learners are often visited once or twice a week in the workplace to ensure that this additional support is maintained. Additional off-the-job training at the college is negotiated with learners and employers when needed.

70. All learners receive a good level of individual support from both provider and college staff. There are regular meetings between training officers, tutors and specialist support staff to discuss individual learners' needs and strategies for providing this support. Confidential reports of pastoral support are recorded. A number of personal counselling specialists are available from the college's additional learning needs unit. Counsellors have been trained in employment law, gay rights and care for young children. Where appropriate, staff work closely with the families of learners to ensure that the best course of action is taken to remedy any issues. Learners often receive financial support to purchase equipment required for their training. Good links have been established with external agencies including the police, the probation service, and drink and drug counsellors. If college staff are unable to provide the level of support required, external agencies are often used.

71. Workplace progress reviews take place every 12 weeks in accordance with the LSC contract. Following the original inspection, a number of different progress review forms and processes have been piloted. A new system is now in place to ensure the comprehensive recording of learners' progress. Employers and work-based supervisors are rarely present at progress reviews and are not involved in planning the training and assessments. The revised progress review forms include a section to record the comments of supervisors and employers. This is rarely used and the signatures of employers are often missing from the forms.

Management of training

Grade 3

72. At the time of the original inspection a team of 19 people managed work-based training. The team consisted of a director, two managers, nine training

organisers, five administration staff and two learning support trainers. The training organisation has been operating for 17 years as a separate unit within West Herts College and, since the original inspection, has become an integral part of the college organisation. The training provider has restructured its organisation which now consists of a manager, two training co-ordinators, five training organisers, three of whom are also assessors, two trainers and four administration staff. It has a set of management policies and procedures. The training provider holds operational management meetings, general staff meetings and meetings of staff from the vocational training centres. It uses a range of subcontractors to provide off-the-job training and assessment. The training provider's manager is a member of the college's strategic team.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ weak operational management structure
- ◆ lack of rigour in the management of the subcontractors
- ◆ ineffective use of data

73. Following the original inspection, the college has worked hard to rectify the weaknesses identified in the TSC report. There have been a number of improvements made to the provision but, in some cases, it is too early to judge if these have been effective. The original weakness of weak operational management structure has clearly been turned into a strength. New strengths and weaknesses were identified at reinspection and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective integration of work-based training into college organisational structure
- ◆ particularly effective staff training programme
- ◆ good strategic planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of service level agreements
- ◆ insufficient analysis and use of data to inform decision-making

74. The college has successfully integrated the work-based training into the main activities of the college. This has led to the establishment of performance indicators and measurable achievements for all training staff. The roles of all staff within the training provider have been re-evaluated as part of an overall re-organisation of the college. All of the training provider's staff have been offered development opportunities, through the college and the LSC. Appropriate staff development has taken place to help staff in their new roles. Within the college, the training provider's and college's staff have established long-term working partnerships. All staff and managers have a clear understanding of their roles and

responsibilities. Each school within the college has a person with overall responsibility for the work-based training. Since the original inspection, more opportunities and facilities have been made available to learners, for example, the college library.

75. All staff have an annual appraisal linked clearly to the business and strategic requirements of the college. This helps to identify training needs which meet the objectives of the organisation and the individual and which provide an effective training programme. The college distributes a monthly newsletter to staff which advertises training courses and events available at the college or with other organisations. Three of the training providers' staff are qualified assessors and one is an internal verifier. One administrator is also a qualified assessor. Staff are undertaking additional qualifications in key skills training, management, and equal opportunities.

76. West Herts College was accredited with the Investors in People Standard in March 2000. Since the reorganisation, the college's strategic plan now applies to all areas of the training provision. There are plans to rewrite some aspects to make it more applicable to work-based training.

77. Most areas of work-based training have an element of their off-the-job training carried out at the college. Learners are often taught alongside other day-release students. In some cases, the work carried out by learners in the workplace is repeated as part of their college training programme. This has led to some absenteeism, slowing learners' progress. In most occupational areas, however, training in the workplace is well planned and clearly indicated on the individual learning plans.

78. Since the original inspection, the provider has rewritten and distributed the service level agreements for both its subcontracted provision and college faculties. Although these accurately reflect the work which is required, monitoring of these contracts has only recently begun and it is too early to judge the impact of these agreements on the training provision. The monitoring of external verification reports is thorough and action has been taken where necessary. However, target achievements are not monitored sufficiently.

79. At the time of the original inspection, data were collected mainly to ensure contractual compliance. Not enough data were collected and insufficient use was made of data available during management planning to assist operational management. Data are now collected in various formats, using a variety of computer software programs. This has caused some confusion, making it difficult to achieve any meaningful analysis and use of these data. The training provider has only recently started to collect data for unit completion and no data have, as yet, been collated for key skills achievements.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

80. West Herts Government Training has a range of quality assurance policies and procedures which have been updated since the original inspection. These meet the requirements for the work-based training contract with the LSC. Most of the college's quality assurance arrangements now apply to this provision. Since the original inspection, the college has established an internal quality assurance self-assessment procedure. Since 1997, the college has had a quality assurance and curriculum committee. The remit of this committee is to review achievement, assess suitability of quality assurance procedures and to monitor the achievement of corporate objectives. Learners' destinations and achievements are monitored regularly. The training provider manager and the college vice-principal are responsible for the quality assurance of the work-based training. Until the end of March 2001, contractual compliance was monitored regularly by the two contracting TECs. This is now the responsibility of the contracting local LSC.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ out-of-date quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ no internal auditing
- ◆ little evaluation of work-based training
- ◆ little sharing of good practice
- ◆ no monitoring of assessment and internal verification process

81. Most of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection have been rectified. In other cases it is too early to be able to measure improvements. The college's quality assurance arrangements have now started to be integrated into the work-based training provision. Sample checks of individual learning plans and progress reviews now take place. Self-assessment now includes work-based training. Good practice is shared across the college's provision and policies and procedures are updated when necessary.

STRENGTH

- ◆ thorough internal audit of individual learning plans and progress reviews
- ◆ good action-planning to improve training provision

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no quality assurance of on-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient use of learners' feedback

82. West Herts College Government Training has clear strategic management aims and objectives and clearly defined management roles and responsibilities, linked to the college's objectives. Since the original inspection, quality assurance procedures, based on self-assessment and target-setting, which cover all work-

based and subcontracted training, have been developed and are now in place. Clearly written guidance notes on self-assessment have also been written. The college's faculties produce annual reports for the college's overall self-assessment report and this includes examination of off-the-job training provided for learners. The internal verification of individual learning plans and progress reviews now takes place. Sample checks are regularly carried out and action has been taken where necessary. Staff are now being trained in completing various documents such as progress reviews and individual learning plans.

83. The training provider has given a high priority to rectifying issues raised at the original inspection. Several revised action plans have been produced which demonstrate the considerable progress made to improve the training provision. Targets were set and most have now been achieved. The implementation of some quality assurance arrangements has, however, been slow. For example, one school has piloted guidance notes for staff on initial interviews which have had a measurable effect on retention rates. These have not yet been adopted by other schools at the college.

84. There is no effective quality assurance of on-the-job training. Within the college there are systems to ensure the monitoring and improvement of training programmes. There are no such systems for training in the workplace. Any observation or assessment of training provision is done in an informal, unstructured way.

85. Learners who attend the college for off-the-job training complete questionnaires. This information is analysed and used to improve the college training facility. Feedback from work-based learners has, however, only recently been collected and no use has yet been made of the information received. Feedback has not been collected from employers to help to improve the training provision.

86. The self-assessment process is good overall. The report is an effective working document which produced good action plan development. The new cycle of self-assessment will be more integrated with the college processes.