

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
MAY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
AUGUST 2001

the Sheffield College



ADULT LEARNING
I N S P E C T O R A T E

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

SUMMARY

The original inspection of The Sheffield College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for business administration, leisure, sport & travel, health, care & public services and quality assurance. 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 business administration, leisure, sport & travel, health, care & public services and quality assurance 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).

The Sheffield College offers good training in hairdressing, construction and media. Hairdressing learners follow a new and effective programme and receive their training in hairdressing salons. New Deal clients receive well-structured training in construction and media. Training in engineering is satisfactory. Training is also satisfactory in hospitality and that provided by one subcontractor is particularly good. At the time of the original inspection, learners and clients received unsatisfactory training in care, business administration and leisure. Assessment was poor in all these areas. Key skills training was inadequate in care and business administration. There were particularly poor resources for learners working towards qualifications in early years care and education. Business administration training is now satisfactory, although key skills training is still not an integral part of the vocational training. Training in care and leisure is still unsatisfactory. Although improvements have been made to resources on the care programme, and to the way that assessment is carried out in both areas of learning, achievement and retention are poor. In most occupational areas, learners do not receive enough assessment in the workplace. In general, learners' achievement and retention rates are poor. The college has a variety of initiatives for promoting equal opportunities but these do not extend to the workplace. There is a well-equipped jobsearch room for New Deal clients. In most occupational areas, reviews of learners' progress are not thorough enough and learners are not set clear targets. The college is systematic in its selection and management of subcontractors. Its use of management information is poor. Feedback from learners is collected, analysed and used effectively in decision-making. Quality assurance remains unsatisfactory. Systems for monitoring the quality of work-based training have improved, but they are neither well established nor effective.

GRADES

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

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Business administration	3
Leisure, sport & travel	4
Health, care & public services	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ innovative and effective salon-based training in hairdressing
- ◆ good training in construction and media for New Deal clients
- ◆ wide range of initiatives for promoting equal opportunities
- ◆ careful selection and good management of subcontractors
- ◆ effective action on feedback from learners by management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment in most areas
- ◆ learners' poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews for most learners
- ◆ inadequate management information systems
- ◆ lack of established system for quality assuring work-based training

INTRODUCTION

1. *The* Sheffield College (the college) is a large tertiary college based on five sites spread across the city of Sheffield. It has over 34,000 students. At the time of the original inspection, there were more than 2,000 staff. Since then, the college has undergone a substantial reorganisation. It has lost approximately 500 of its employees, including over 100 teaching staff, through voluntary redundancy. Work-based training in the college is still managed by the business development unit. The business development unit was set up in September 1995 to manage training and enterprise council (TEC) contracts, to find and monitor work placements for all college students and to manage franchising arrangements. The New Deal unit, part of the business development unit, was established in January 1998 to offer the full-time education and training option of New Deal through an Employment Service contract.

2. When the original inspection took place, the college was contracted by Sheffield TEC and the Employment Service to offer training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hospitality, health, care and public services, hairdressing, sport and recreation, business administration, engineering, construction, and media, as well as foundation for work programmes. Foundation for work was not inspected, as it is subcontracted to a local training provider which had only recently been inspected by the Training Standards Council (TSC). The college also offers training leading to qualifications in manufacturing and retailing but these programmes had only a few learners on them so were not inspected. At the time of the original inspection, the college had 234 modern apprentices, 98 national learners, 99 learners following other training programmes and eight people in work-based learning for adults training. In addition, it had 171 New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option in a range of occupational areas. There are now 164 advanced modern apprentices, 124 foundation modern apprentices and 23 youth learners. One hundred and sixty-six New Deal clients are on the full-time education and training option. The college's work-based training is now funded by South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. Sheffield is one of the largest cities in England, with a population of just over half a million. In the past, its industry centred on the production of metals. As this has declined, so has the region's overall industrial and economic base. Health and education are currently the largest occupational areas in the city.

4. Unemployment rates in the area have been above the national average for the past two decades. At the time of the original inspection, 6.6 per cent of the local population were unemployed, but the unemployment rate was as much as 14.5 per cent in some parts of the city. In June 2001, the unemployment rate was 4.7 per cent, well above the national average of 3 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Sheffield averages 5 per cent, but rises to 25 per cent in some parts of the city. This compares with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In

1999, the proportion of school leavers in Sheffield achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 37.6 per cent, well below the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the proportion was 41.2 per cent compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The self-assessment report for the original inspection was compiled by the business development manager, the business development officer and the principal training co-ordinator, in consultation with other members of the business development unit and the college lecturers who provided off-the-job training. Key staff attended several training events arranged by the local TEC, as well as nationally organised workshops. Senior college managers examined the report and amended some of the grades. In preparation for reinspection, the business development manager, principal training co-ordinator and quality co-ordinator wrote a brief report outlining what had been done to rectify the weaknesses identified in the original inspection and the outcome of the Further Education Funding Council's review of the college. The college's action plan has been updated to reflect the progress made in dealing with both strengths and weaknesses.

6. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 41 days at the business development unit in May 2000. They visited 52 workplaces and interviewed 148 learners and 48 work-based supervisors. Eighty-six interviews were held with members of the college's staff. Inspectors observed 13 training sessions, 12 of which were awarded grades, and examined the records of 12 training sessions observed by inspectors from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Inspectors also examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios and files, and the college's policies, procedures and contracts.

7. For the reinspection, a team of three inspectors spent 12 days at the business development unit in August 2001. They visited 15 workplaces and one subcontractor and interviewed 22 learners and 15 work-based supervisors. They observed a review of one learner's progress, and held interviews with eight staff from the business development unit and eight staff from other departments of the college. They examined learners' portfolios and individual learning plans, schemes of work, work placement documents, policies and procedures, internal and external verification reports, contractual information and other documents.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions during the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	0	2	4	0	0	6
Business administration	0	0	1	0	0	1
Hospitality	0	0	1	0	0	1
Hair & beauty	2	1	0	0	0	3
Health, care & public services	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	2	3	7	0	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

8. Construction is a new programme area for *the* Sheffield college. Training was first offered in 1999 and *the* Sheffield College currently has 69 trainees on construction programmes. Twenty-six of these are on New Deal. Training leads to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in carpentry and joinery, plumbing, and construction technician qualifications. There are eight carpentry and joinery modern apprentice trainees, 17 plumbing modern apprentice trainees and two gas installation careership trainees. There are 16 construction technician trainees who are working towards a national certificate in building studies. The New Deal clients attend college for the whole week, and follow the full-time education and training option across the range of construction trades. The breakdown of clients in terms of the occupational qualifications towards which they are working, is as follows; four clients in carpentry and joinery, two clients in plumbing, five clients in brickwork, seven clients in electrical installation, eight clients in painting and decorating. NVQ trainees attend *the* Sheffield College on a day-release basis where training and assessment for trainees in building crafts is carried out by a team of 10 college tutors. All these tutors have appropriate occupational and assessor qualifications, and eight have verifier qualifications. Some assessment is carried out in the workplace. Modern apprentices and careership trainees have employed status, and New Deal clients are on work placements in different local companies. The self-assessment report provided little factual information. Numbers of trainees and New Deal clients were not given. The self-assessment report listed strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice, together with some strengths and weaknesses which related to generic aspects of provision. Inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses were identified. They awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly good work placements

- ◆ effective building studies programme
- ◆ good training resources in gas installation and plumbing
- ◆ good training for New Deal clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no work-based assessment in carpentry and joinery
- ◆ some trainees' uncertainty about NVQ requirements

9. *The* Sheffield college has well-established links with a number of local companies, who provide a wide and appropriate range of work placements and employment opportunities. Employers are strongly committed to training and recognise the importance of providing trainees with support, and learning opportunities, in the workplace. Trainees gain good occupational experience through company job rotation opportunities. They welcome the opportunities they are given to acquire good craft skills and they take pride in the work they produce. Trainees are well motivated and, where appropriate, are able to work without direct supervision.

10. Training programmes have clearly written specifications. There are good systems for recording trainees' progress. Learning support materials and assessment packs have been produced which enable trainees to compile good portfolios of relevant evidence. Building technician trainees follow a well-established building studies programme. This provides them with a broad-based learning experience in construction across a range of disciplines, including, architectural studies, draughtsmanship and structural engineering. Employers in this sector have a high regard for the effectiveness of the programme. Trainees have access to good resource materials. Plumbing and gas installation tutors have good links with local companies. Several companies have given the college a range of useful equipment for use as learning resources. Trainees on all construction programmes value the quality and range of the off-the-job training opportunities available to them.

11. New Deal clients are well motivated. They are assessed regularly and they negotiate assessment opportunities with their trainers. Trainers are successful in finding good opportunities for clients to have work experience in painting and decorating, brickwork and electrical installation. The work placements help clients to achieve their qualification aim, and to progress into employment, where they can work towards further NVQs.

POOR PRACTICE

The carpentry and joinery workshops are potentially hazardous working environments where safety equipment must be worn. However, New Deal clients in the carpentry and joinery workshops were not given the required footwear.

12. Trainees are encouraged, with the help of their employers, to acquire more evidence from the workplace of their acquisition of the requisite NVQ competencies. Trainers in plumbing and gas installation are now working with employers to identify more opportunities for trainees to be assessed in the workplace. This practice is recent and innovative and it is not yet established on all programmes. There is still no work-based assessment in carpentry and joinery. All assessment in carpentry and joinery takes place in simulated work-based

conditions in the college workshops. Retention rates are poor in this area. No trainee or client has yet obtained a qualification in carpentry and joinery. Employers receive information from the college about the NVQs that trainees are following. However, some employers still lack awareness of the requirements and structure of the NVQ system. Although employers of construction technicians have some knowledge of the programme their employees are following, they are not given details of the programme structure. Trainees' work-based supervisors often have little knowledge of the requirements and range of the NVQ or the requirements of the technician programme. Trainees receive reviews of their progress regularly. These reviews, however, do not focus sufficiently on trainees' personal development and trainees' progress towards achievement of the NVQ. During the reviews, trainees are not set targets. Individual training plans are not updated to take account of trainees' progress. Some trainees do not understand what their programme requires of them and some do not understand the nature and purpose of work-based assessment.

Engineering

Grade 3

13. The college provides engineering training in mechanical production, fabrication and welding, and motor vehicle engineering training in motor vehicle repair and maintenance and vehicle body repair. In engineering, there are 111 modern apprentices, 13 national trainees and 13 other trainees. In motor vehicle engineering there are 12 modern apprentices, eight national trainees and nine other trainees. All are employed or on work placement in small to medium-sized local garages and engineering firms. Some engineering trainees have a period of block-release training at the start of their programme, but the majority of them, and all motor vehicle trainees, attend off-the-job training on one day each week. Assessment is carried out partly in the workplace, by work-based supervisors, and partly in college. The college's engineering staff all possess relevant occupational and assessor awards. The self-assessment report for this area lacks detail and clarity, and many of the strengths claimed represent no more than contractual compliance. Inspectors confirmed the grade given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective partnerships between employers, college staff and business development unit staff
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good system for planning workplace training
- ◆ good equipment and resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress by some trainees
- ◆ some missed opportunities for work-based assessment

◆ low achievement rates by motor vehicle trainees

14. *The* Sheffield college has an employers' liaison group which was set up four years ago to launch the NVQ programme. A number of local companies are involved in it. They are invited to termly meetings, held over breakfast. These minuted meetings have dealt systematically with the development of the NVQ programme. They have made college's engineering staff fully aware of the importance of continuous improvement and have given employers a better understanding of aspects of training such as assessment in the workplace and key skills. In addition, they ensure that the college remains accountable to employers for the training it provides.

15. Work placements are varied, and through them, trainees receive thorough and relevant on-the-job training. Employers offer a productive work environment in which trainees can develop many of the skills they need in order to obtain their NVQ. If they are unable to provide trainees with work that enables them to acquire the necessary competencies, employers liaise with college staff to ensure that alternative arrangements are made for them. Trainees receive good support, both in the workplace and off the job. They cite many examples of personal or training-related problems, including financial difficulties and additional learning needs, which have been effectively dealt with by a partnership involving college tutors, training co-ordinators and employers. Communication between these three parties is regular and constructive, and they work together to ensure that trainees' problems are appropriately resolved, in order that trainees may have every chance of success.

16. The motor vehicle and engineering training facilities at the college were moved to a new, purpose-built site two years ago. On this, there is well-laid-out accommodation with good, modern equipment. Trainees are able to produce quality work in which they take pride.

17. Over the past four years, the college has introduced new arrangements for work-based training and assessment. In engineering, there is no assessment in the workplace for NVQs at level 2, but level 3 trainees gather evidence in the workplace for assessment by their work-based supervisor. College lecturers visit workplaces once every four to eight weeks to provide guidance for trainees and their supervisors, to test trainees' knowledge and understanding, and to carry out some assessment by observation. After the first of these visits, a training plan is produced, relating to units of the NVQ, and this takes into account the job role and ability of the trainee. At subsequent visits well-structured action plans are drawn up for the trainees. Motor vehicle engineers benefit from a similar process. It is comprehensive and highly effective and it makes both trainees and their employers fully aware of the importance of organising workplace activities to enable trainees to cover all elements and units of their NVQ.

18. This new system for work-based training and assessment has been introduced very slowly, however, and so far, little assessment or action planning has happened in the second year of training. Most assessment has been concentrated in the third

year. Many opportunities for work-based assessment in the earlier stages of training have been lost. The new system has not been used with level 2 trainees at all. They have missed opportunities for workplace assessment, and are required to repeat at college tasks in which they have already demonstrated their competence in the workplace. A number of trainees have made very slow progress, particularly towards their level 3 qualification, and have had to have their target date for achieving it extended. In engineering, of trainees starting in 1997-98, 55 per cent of national trainees and other trainees and 71 per cent of modern apprentices have so far achieved a level 2 NVQ. Five per cent of modern apprentices have achieved an NVQ at level 3, and 60 per cent remain in training. In motor vehicle, of the trainees commencing their programme in 1997-98, three per cent of national trainees and other trainees, and 10 per cent of modern apprentices, have achieved an NVQ at level 2. No modern apprentices have achieved a qualification at level 3. Only two of that group remain in training. There are high numbers of early leavers on the motor vehicle programme, and retention rates are low, at around 40 per cent.

Business administration

Grade: 3

19. At the time of the original inspection, there were 58 learners on business administration programmes, 45 working towards NVQs in administration and 13 in accountancy. There are now 18 learners. Six are advanced modern apprentices, four working towards NVQs in administration at level 2 and two working towards level 3. Nine are foundation modern apprentices working towards level 2 NVQs. Another advanced modern apprentice is taking a level 2 NVQ in accountancy. There are two New Deal clients on the further training and education option. Learners are employed in a wide range of companies and organisations throughout Sheffield. New Deal clients attend one of the college's sites for five days each week, where they receive training in administration and computer work, and help with looking for jobs. Seven qualified and experienced tutors carry out the administration training. Learners working towards level 2 NVQs attend the college for off-the-job training for a half day on two weeks out of three and a full day on the third week. The advanced modern apprentices are encouraged to attend for a half day each week. A training co-ordinator carries out progress reviews with all administration and accounting learners every six to eight weeks. This training co-ordinator is a qualified assessor, and has occupational experience and qualifications in administration.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ late introduction of key skills training in administration programmes
- ◆ college's inaccurate framework document for learners and modern apprentices
- ◆ little use of work-based evidence for accountancy
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ some learners' slow progress

20. Significant improvements have been made to assessment practice and the framework document used is now accurate. Learners are progressing through their qualifications at a satisfactory rate. These weaknesses have been successfully resolved. The weakness about key skills training has been partially dealt with. Little progress has been made in putting right the problems with work-based training in accountancy, although far fewer learners are now affected by this. In its brief self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection, the college accurately identifies the strengths and two of the weaknesses found by inspectors. However, it fails to recognise the importance of the poor achievement rates of advanced modern apprentices.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective on-the-job training
- ◆ flexible training in administration
- ◆ good off-the-job training in information technology

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to integrate key skills training with NVQ training
- ◆ inadequate use of work-based evidence in accountancy training
- ◆ low achievement rates in advanced modern apprenticeships

21. Learners are employed in a wide range of good workplaces, including media companies, engineering companies, the fire service and local universities. Employers have a clear commitment to on-the-job training, are supportive of learners and help them to gain their qualifications. Many learners have well-planned training programmes which give them wide experience in their employers' different departments. Most employers have up-to-date office equipment and computer software. Learners are able to develop their skills in using office technology. This applies even to those who do not use these skills in their normal work. Many employers offer additional training courses to learners which allow them to gain extra qualifications, for example, in desk-top publishing, customer care and supervisory skills. Learners are well supervised but are also given extra and demanding responsibilities.

22. The college makes flexible arrangements for off-the-job training in administration. This was a strength in the original inspection, but arrangements have improved further since. Training now takes place at one central college site, rather than being spread across four different ones. Learners do not join groups of other college students, but attend sessions tailored specifically to meet their own needs. Learners taking level 3 NVQs meet with tutors for individual guidance about their NVQ work. They attend college approximately once every three weeks, according to their individual needs. This arrangement allows them to give priority to gathering evidence at work, rather than attending off-the-job training which does not necessarily meet their needs. The college has a procedure for contacting level 3 learners who have not attended for six weeks, to ensure that they are

meeting targets with their evidence-gathering and that they are receiving the support they need. Most learners taking level 2 NVQs attend college once each week. Flexible arrangements are made for those who are unable to attend weekly. These learners' off-the-job training is well planned, with a good mixture of group work and individual coaching. Training rooms are spacious and well equipped, with enough computers and a wide range of textbooks. An office area provides a realistic working environment in which learners can practice their skills in filing and reception work.

23. The college offers a good range of training in computer work. All level 2 learners take basic computer literacy and word processing qualifications. Higher qualifications, such as the European computer driving licence and information technology diplomas, are also offered. Computer training facilities are good. Subcontractors offer good information technology training to New Deal clients.

24. Learners and tutors now fully understand the modern apprenticeship framework and its content. Modern apprentices had previously been given inaccurate information about their apprenticeships. They were unaware of the additional training they had to do. Learners' individual learning plans now clearly specify all the training required for completion of a foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship.

25. Assessment in the workplace is now regular and well planned. When the original inspection took place, work-based assessment on the administration training was poorly planned and recorded. Assessment records did not show which specific competencies had been assessed. Assessors now agree their visits with learners well in advance to ensure that they will be able to observe learners carrying out a wide range of workplace activities. Observations of learners' performance are thoroughly recorded and clearly show which units and elements have been covered. Portfolios are well organised, with a diverse and appropriate range of evidence.

26. At the time of the original inspection, training in key skills had only just been introduced. Some learners had not started to collect evidence of their competence in key skills. Learners' understanding of the five key skills units was poor and there was little integration of their key skills training with the NVQ training. Level 3 learners, some of whom had almost completed work for their NVQs, had not yet been registered for their key skills qualifications. All administration learners are now registered for key skills qualifications, and receive key skills training from the beginning of their training programme. They understand that key skills are an essential part of their modern apprenticeship. However, key skills are still not taught or assessed as an integral part of the NVQ training. Learners carry out separate assignments which provide evidence for key skills units. Although some evidence is cross-referenced from their NVQ portfolios, there is not enough of this. Learners do not collect enough key skills evidence at work. The foundation modern apprentice taking an accountancy qualification has been in training for a year, but has not yet started gathering evidence of his key skills.

27. There is still insufficient use of work-based evidence on the accountancy training. These learners gather most of the evidence in their portfolios from assignments produced by the awarding body, which learners carry out under simulated workplace conditions. Assessors do not visit learners at work to assess their practical competence. There is now only one accountancy learner and the college has no plans to recruit any more.

28. Achievement and retention rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship are low. Of those learners starting in 2000, 46 per cent have achieved a level 2 qualification and moved on to level 3. The remaining 54 per cent left with no qualifications. Only 19 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices starting in 1999 achieved their framework, with 34 per cent gaining an NVQ at level 3. Over three-quarters of the 1999 starters left without completing their qualification framework. Achievement among foundation modern apprentices commencing in 1999 was poor, with 93 per cent leaving before completing their qualification. However, achievement has substantially improved since then. Of the foundation modern apprentices starting their qualification in 2000, 15 per cent have already completed their framework. A further 55 per cent are still in training and are making good progress. Learners also make faster progress through their qualification now. The time taken by learners to complete an NVQ at level 2 has fallen, from two years to between 12 and 18 months. Learners' progress through their level 3 qualification is also satisfactory.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 4

29. At the time of the original inspection, there were five learners and eight New Deal clients training in sport and recreation. There are now only two learners, both New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. Their training and assessment is subcontracted to another organisation. The business development unit suspended recruitment to work-based learning in sport and recreation shortly after the original inspection, because of difficulties in finding appropriate work placements. No new learners have started since September 2000. For the reinspection, inspectors interviewed learners who had recently left the training programme. Since the original inspection, three learners have completed an NVQ at level 2 in activity leadership or operational services. Learners attend college for off-the-job training for up to three days each week. Assessment is carried out by college staff who visit the workplaces as part of learners' planned timetables. Reviews of learners' progress are carried out by the training co-ordinator from the business development unit approximately every eight weeks.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ no achievement of NVQ units by learners
- ◆ learners, clients and employers' poor understanding of the NVQ process

30. Progress has been made in dealing with these weaknesses, but none has been fully resolved. The procedures for assessment are more flexible, but remain unsatisfactory. Some learners have now achieved a level 2 NVQ, but have not completed their qualification framework. Learners' understanding of the NVQ process has improved, but employers remain uncertain about their role and responsibilities. The college's update of its self-assessment report for the reinspection bases its evaluation of the sport and recreation training on the strengths and weaknesses identified during the original inspection. It fails to recognise learners' slow progress in achieving key skills qualifications, the poor rate of achievement of qualification frameworks and the inadequacy of learners' individual learning plan.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ opportunities for additional qualifications
- ◆ effective progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress in achieving key skills qualifications
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ insufficiently flexible assessment
- ◆ inadequate individual learning plans

31. During their attendance at college, learners are able to take a wide range of occupationally relevant additional qualifications. Qualifications are available in first aid, health and safety, community sports leadership, fitness training, sports coaching and pool lifeguard work. These courses motivate learners and help to develop their confidence and employability, as well as providing useful theoretical and practical knowledge. The additional qualifications are highly valued by employers.

32. Training co-ordinators carry out regular progress reviews in the workplace. All aspects of each learner's experience are discussed and a detailed record is kept of this discussion. Problems are clearly identified and any necessary action agreed. Learners are set short-term targets and their progress in reaching them is monitored at subsequent reviews. The learner, employer and training co-ordinator sign the progress review record and a copy is sent to the learner's tutor at college. Where problems are identified, they are dealt with promptly by the training co-ordinator.

33. The arrangements for the teaching and assessing of key skills are not effective. Insufficient use is made of evidence from the workplace. The college gives very little emphasis to key skills until the end of the training programme, when learners are encouraged to look through their portfolios for key skills evidence. Learners find this difficult and are often unsure how to identify the necessary evidence. Their progress through the key skills units is slow. None of the learners has completed their key skills qualifications. One learner completed his NVQ twelve

months ago but has still not achieved his key skills qualification. The college has held additional key skills training sessions but these were not well attended.

34. The retention of learners on sport and recreation programmes is poor and most leave without achieving any qualifications. Since 1998, the college has recruited 14 learners. None of them has completed their qualification framework. Three have achieved an NVQ at level 2. One of these is an advanced modern apprentice, who left before starting his level 3 NVQ. The rest left with no qualifications.

35. The time available for assessment is still insufficient to ensure that learners can be assessed when it is appropriate for them. Assessment is carried out in the workplace by an occupationally qualified college tutor. These visits used to take place at the same time each week. This was unsatisfactory, because it meant that the assessor usually observed the learner carrying out the same routine task. The assessment arrangements are now more flexible. The assessor has four hours each week for assessment to use at her discretion and the learners can make appointments with her if they want to be assessed. Learners are still carrying out work which could count towards their qualifications, but which is not being assessed. The assessor is not available for several weeks over the summer and no alternative arrangements are made for learners to be assessed.

36. Each learner has an individual learning plan but these are not updated to take account of learners' progress. They contain little information specific to the learner. In most cases the information contained in the plans is neither up to date nor complete. There are no target dates for achievement of NVQ units and no record of the dates when reviews of learners' progress are due. When learners achieve qualifications, this is not always recorded. There is no record on the individual learning plan of any additional qualifications learners are taking.

Hospitality

Grade 3

37. In this occupational area, five modern apprentices, nine national trainees and four New Deal clients are based at the college. A further five modern apprentices and five national trainees are trained by one of the college's subcontractors. Subcontracted trainees all have employed status. Their recruitment, induction, training and assessment are carried out by the subcontractor. Almost all the training and assessment of this group takes place in the workplace. College-based trainees are recruited and found placements by the college's business development unit. They attend off-the-job training in the college on one day each week. During this day, they work in a simulated working environment, and have classroom sessions for theory work. All assessment is carried out at the college. The college's hospitality staff are all highly experienced in the hospitality industry, and are qualified as assessors and internal verifiers. The subcontractor's training co-ordinator/assessor is occupationally qualified and is a qualified assessor, and their local manager is a qualified internal verifier. Some workplace supervisors have, or are working towards, assessor qualifications. The self-assessment report did not

evaluate the hospitality programmes effectively, and failed to identify some key strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly good on-the-job training through subcontractor
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ highly effective system for monitoring trainees and clients' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no workplace assessments for trainees at college
- ◆ poor retention rates of trainees at college
- ◆ trainees' slow rate of progress

38. Work placements for all college-based trainees and clients are arranged by placement staff in the business-development unit. During visits to prospective placements, college staff are systematic in ensuring that employers comply with all the college's contractual requirements, and understand key procedures related to the programme. Trainees are matched to an employer on the basis of their aspirations, personal attributes and ability. Work placements include fast-food outlets, restaurants, institutional caterers, pubs and hotels. Employers show a high level of commitment to helping their trainees to succeed. They value them, and further their training and development.

39. The subcontracted trainees are employed by organisations which provide training to very high standards. The subcontractor has successfully encouraged supervisors to achieve assessor qualifications, and ensure that assessment opportunities in the workplace are not missed. The subcontractor has developed a substantial national bank of training and assessment materials. All trainees are issued at the start of their programme, with sets of resources covering the requirements of their training plan. Almost all training takes place at work, and is managed according to a plan agreed between the employer, the trainee and the subcontractor at the start of the programme. Subcontracted trainees achieve a high level of skills. One took part in an international competition for professional caterers, and was mistakenly entered in a senior class intended for qualified, experienced chefs. She was, however, awarded the silver medal.

40. In addition to the contractual progress reviews carried out by the training co-ordinator, the college-based trainees' progress is reviewed by the trainees' tutor during off-the-job training. This tutor has devised his own recording system which shows at a glance, the progress of each trainee towards achievement of the NVQ. It also shows the training received by each trainee during each session at college. This system gives trainees a clear picture of their progress.

41. In 1998-99, 63 per cent of college-based hospitality trainees left their programme early without completing their framework. Early leavers have not

responded well to request for information on their destination but comments from their former workmates, and from other trainees, indicate that many have left to seek or take up employment, often outside the Sheffield area. This high drop-out rate has existed for at least the past three years. The programme review team is examining the problem, and is actively considering ways of addressing it.

42. All assessment of college-based trainees takes place in the college during off-the-job training. The trainees have to spend a considerable amount of time in the college's training kitchen. Trainees join classes with students on FEFC-funded courses, and are expected to follow the same training schedule as them. The trainees have greater workplace experience and many are further advanced, in terms of skill acquisition, than the students. Trainees have to repeat work at college requiring techniques they are already using competently on a regular basis at work. Although trainees respect the high levels of skill demonstrated by their tutors, they are frustrated by what they see as unnecessary duplication of their efforts. No assessment occurs in the workplace, although some work-based supervisors are qualified assessors. Opportunities are missed for assessing trainees in naturally occurring situations in the workplace.

43. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. In their progress reviews, college-based trainees are not set specific short-term targets to spur them on. There is little direct contact between college tutors and the supervisors providing training in the workplace. The training co-ordinators try to liaise with the college. They often lack, however, vocational or training experience. Trainees feel that they should be making faster progress towards achieving their qualifications. Many trainees leave the programme early and the achievement rate is very low. No college-based trainee obtained an NVQ in 1998-99. The trainees' achievement rates on the subcontracted programmes are higher.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

44. There are 63 trainees working towards hairdressing qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Twenty are modern apprentices, 33 are national trainees, and 10 are other trainees. All trainees have employed status. There are two training routes available for trainees: salon-based training, a pilot scheme in which all training and assessment takes place in the workplace, and college-based training where trainees spend four days a week in a commercial salon and one day a week in the college salons, where most of their training and assessment takes place. The college has four hairdressing salons, including a training salon, and three beauty salons which are open to the public. Fourteen members of the college staff teach and assess on hairdressing programmes. All have occupational and assessor qualifications. A further four assessors are based in the workplace. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and with one of the two weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective and innovative training in the salons
- ◆ high ratio of trainers and assessors to trainees in the workplace
- ◆ successful integration of key skills training with hairdressing training
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to work towards additional qualifications
- ◆ very effective assessment and internal verification system
- ◆ effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ narrow range of models in college salons
- ◆ poor retention rates

45. The college has recently designed a salon-based approach to training, which aims to take into account the requirements of both trainees and employers. On the salon-based route, most training and assessment takes place in the workplace with help from college staff. Priority is given to ensuring training and assessment are work-based. Opportunities to assess trainees in naturally occurring situations in the workplace are exploited well. Trainees are able to cover the full range of requisite NVQ competencies. Trainees attend college for theory sessions and key skills training on one day a month. Many employers are committed to supporting this programme, as it offers them considerable flexibility. The college helps to increase the number of work-based assessors by offering training leading to assessor and internal verifier qualifications to employers and their staff, free of charge. For trainees following the college-based route, most assessment occurs during off-the-job training at the college's training salon. However, college assessors also visit the workplace on a regular basis to enable trainees to be assessed in naturally occurring situations.

46. Key skills training is fully integral to NVQ programmes in hairdressing. Key skills training is promoted to trainees and employers as a relevant and important part of the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks. Key skills learning packs for information technology, application of number and communication have been devised by the hairdressing department. These aim to facilitate the teaching and assessment of trainees through occupational work. Trainees find it easy to cross-reference their evidence of competence in key skills to the NVQ criteria.

47. The college offers all trainees the opportunity to gain additional qualifications. These include an NVQ in customer service at level 3, and a basic barbering course. Training in customer service is offered to help trainees to solve problems, deal effectively with customers' complaints and increase their communication skills. The social skills they learn through training towards this additional qualification complement the technical skills required in hairdressing. The basic barbering course offers two units of the full barbering qualification, cutting and beard trimming. Trainees are also taught the basics of clipper work and the use of

specialist equipment, such as flat-top combs for fashion work. The college employs two qualified commercial barbers on a part-time basis specifically for this course. Trainees work towards additional qualifications with the aim of increasing their employability.

48. The assessment and internal verification process is well-planned and effective. Records showing sampling and giving details of trainees' progress are regularly maintained and easy to follow. Trainees are fully involved in the assessment process. Assessors check trainees' understanding before an assessment begins, and ensure that they understand the NVQ criteria and requirements. Feedback on trainees' performance is concise and fair. The internal verification process is rigorous. The internal verifier has set up an assessors' forum to which assessors from the college and work-based assessors are invited. This meets once a term to review and monitor the quality of assessment practice and to update staff on awarding body requirements.

49. On- and off-the-job training is clearly linked. Annual training plans are agreed between college staff and employers, and copies are given to the employers. This ensures that practical training sessions carried out in the workplace complement and relate to the theory sessions at the college.

50. The college training salons are open to the public and operate commercially to some extent. The range of models available to trainees is, however, narrow. It does not meet the needs of trainees working towards an NVQ at level 3, who need to practise on a wide range of models in order to cover the full range of requisite NVQ competencies. They are encouraged to bring their own models into the practical sessions, but for some trainees are unable to do this. The college are aware of the problem and are taking steps, through internal advertising to resolve it.

51. Achievement and retention on hairdressing programmes are below average for the sector. In 1997-8, there were 49 new trainees on the national traineeships and other training programmes. Of these, 14 achieved a level 2 qualification and eight achieved a level 3 qualification. Of 16 new modern apprentices, four achieved a level 2 qualification and one achieved a level 3 qualification. In 1998-99, 55 national and other trainees commenced training programmes. Two achieved a level 2 qualification. Of the 16 new modern apprentices in that year, six achieved a level 3 qualification. In 1999-2000 there were 44 new national and other trainees and none has so far achieved a qualification at level 2. There have been no level 2 achievements so far. Of the 14 new modern apprentices, two have achieved a qualification at level 2, and one a qualification at level 3. A large proportion of trainees, on average 50 per cent per year, leave their programme early.

Health, care & public services

Grade 4

52. The college provides training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years

care and education and a nationally recognised qualification in dental nursing. At the time of the original inspection, there were 21 learners working towards NVQs in early years care and 12 dental nursing learners. There are now 18 learners working towards early years care NVQs, fifteen advanced modern apprentices and three foundation modern apprentices. There is also one New Deal client on the full-time education and training option, working towards a level 2 NVQ. A subcontractor manages this client's training and assessment. There are five dental nurse learners, who are on other work-based training programmes for young people. One of them is working towards the national certificate in dental nursing. The remaining four are working towards an NVQ on a pilot scheme. Learners work in dental surgeries, a dental hospital, childcare nurseries and schools. College tutors carry out weekly off-the-job training for learners taking the early years care level 2 NVQ, and dental learners. This takes place during term time only. Early years care level 3 learners do not receive off-the-job training. Training and assessment in early years care are organised and managed through a group of local companies who, together with the college, have formed an assessment centre. There is one part-time early years tutor and two part-time dental nurse tutors, all of whom are occupationally qualified and experienced. Two assessors carry out assessment for the early years NVQs. There are no work-based assessors. Assessment for dental nurses is carried out through nationally set examinations. One learner sat this exam in May and is awaiting results. Dental nurse tutors assess the practical ability of the remaining four learners during off-the-job training. The college arranged for work-based assessment against the new occupational standards to begin in September 2001, shortly after the inspection. Reviews of learners' progress are carried out by two training co-ordinators, neither of whom is occupationally qualified or experienced. The college suspended recruitment to its early years care training in April 2001.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ inadequate resourcing of the early years programme
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to the programme

53. The resources for the early years education training are now satisfactory. A part-time tutor for the early years training has been appointed and is responsible for assessing 16 learners. Learners are now allocated a room in a temporary building in the college grounds for their off-the-job training. The other two weaknesses have not been resolved, although some progress has been made. The college's update to its self-assessment report was based on the strengths and weaknesses found during the original inspection. It accurately identified the two strengths, and two of the weaknesses, but failed to recognise the significance of poor achievement rates on the early years care training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good dental nursing resources

- ◆ well-planned training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ late introduction of key skills training
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

54. The weekly off-the-job training for dental nursing learners is well planned and covers all aspects of the dental nursing syllabus. It takes place in a modern, well-equipped suite, which contains materials and equipment of industry standard, which allows learners to develop their practical skills in a very realistic working environment. Workplace training for dental nurses is also good. Learners gain experience of a wide variety of dental procedures. Training, supervision and support is provided by experienced and qualified practitioners.

55. For early years care learners, there is a planned programme of off-the-job training, which relates directly to the NVQ requirements. Learners are given a copy of the training schedule. The college has purchased training materials for learners to work through in their own time. This helps learners to produce evidence of their knowledge of theory. Employers value work-based training and ensure that learners receive appropriate guidance. Many learners have access to in-house training and are sent on external training courses by their employers. Some learners receive first aid training arranged by their employer. However, the college's communications with some employers are poor. Employers are not always fully aware of the requirements of NVQ training and do not receive a copy of the schedule for off-the-job training sessions. They rely on the learner to share this information with them.

56. The college effectively shows learners how much progress they have made by obtaining a certificate from the awarding body for each. Learners working towards NVQs in early years care receive a certificate from the awarding body for each unit that they achieve. By applying for these certificates, the college makes it clear to learners what they have achieved and how far through their qualification they have progressed. It helps learners to maintain their interest and motivation. Ten of the 18 learners have benefitted from unit certification.

57. Key skills training is still not an integral part of the occupational training programme. At the original inspection, the training materials used were not relevant and learners did not begin gathering key skills evidence until they had completed the work for their NVQ. Little progress has been made. The teaching and assessment of key skills still occurs very late in learners' training programme. Some of the learners working towards level 2 early years NVQs have been in training for over a year and have had no assessment of their key skills. They have not collected any evidence of their key skills from their everyday work. The college provided one information session on key skills in June 2001, since when some learners have been shown how to cross-reference key skills evidence from the evidence collected for their NVQ. The college plans to teach and assess key

skills in a more systematic way from September 2001.

58. Some assessment practice is weak. At the time of the original inspection, early years care and education learners had no assessment during their first year of training. Assessment now takes place from the first year, but some learners who started in 2000 were not assessed during their first five months in training. There is insufficient direct observation of the performance of early years care learners. Most learners have only been observed once for each NVQ unit. This does not allow assessors to confirm that learners consistently perform satisfactorily. There is little evidence of oral questioning by assessors to judge learners' competence. Most learners' portfolios do not contain witness testimonies from their work-based supervisors or colleagues. There is too much written evidence in portfolios. Some portfolios contain over 50 pages of written evidence, for a single unit. Learners find it difficult to produce such large amounts of written evidence. A few of the portfolios contain a good range of evidence, which includes photographs and samples of the work and activities learners have carried out. However, there is no authentication to confirm that the evidence is the learners' own work.

59. Achievement on the early years care programme is poor. Only 13 per cent of those learners starting advanced modern apprentices programmes since 1998 have achieved an NVQ level 3 and 36 per cent an NVQ level 2. None has completed their qualification framework. No-one has completed the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. Learners who started training in 2000-2001, have made very slow progress. Despite being in training for sixteen months, one learner has only achieved one unit of the level 2 NVQ. A learner who has been in training for three years has only just completed a level 2 NVQ. Retention of learners on all training programmes is poor.

POOR PRACTICE

One learner has a certificate in childcare and education. This prior learning and achievement has not been taken into account in the planning of her training programme.

60. Individual learning plans are still not being individually negotiated with learners. The plans do not take account of each learner's individual circumstances. They contain a photocopy of standard details about the NVQ units and elements. There is no reference to the key skills learners will work towards. The plans do not specify targets for individual learners' completion of the NVQ or key skills units. They are not updated to reflect learners' progress.

Media & design

Grade 2

61. Those following media programmes are all New Deal clients. They take one of two routes. Thirteen are on the full-time education and training option, six of them are training in art and design, one in media access, and six in photography. Art and design clients take either the mature access to higher education qualification, or the 18+ foundation diploma in art and design. Media access and photography clients work towards appropriate vocational qualifications or access to higher education awards, or qualifications offered by the Open College Network. A further 55 clients are following the New Deal option for musicians, working towards the practical music qualification awarded by the Open College Network.

This provision is subcontracted to a local company, which provides a music industry expert who offers advice and guidance for clients on the option. Clients are referred to media programmes by their New Deal personal advisers. They attend taster days held by the subcontractor to help them decide whether the option is right for them. Clients on the full-time education and training option start their training in September, at the beginning of the academic year, or, at the latest, in October. Those on programmes offered by the subcontractor can start at any time of the year. Tutors at the college and the subcontractor all have assessor awards. The self-assessment report does not refer to media as an occupational area in its own right, but covers it in a separate section describing New Deal provision in general within the college. This lacks critical analysis, and the strengths stated represent no more than contractual compliance. No grade was given for the media provision. The grade given by the provider for New Deal provision as a whole was lower than the grade the inspectors awarded for training in media and design.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly motivated clients
- ◆ well-resourced facilities
- ◆ flexible use of facilities to meet clients' personal needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of relevant work placements
- ◆ some college tutors' poor understanding of New Deal programmes

62. Clients receive good training opportunities on all options. They develop their capabilities and practical skills quickly. They gain confidence, and self-esteem. Clients are enthusiastic about their programmes, and are very keen to succeed. Those based in the college are integrated into groups of full-time, mature students on FEFC-funded courses and enjoy a secure and supportive learning environment in which they feel well supported. They benefit from access to a wide range of college facilities, and are able to approach a range of staff for practical advice and valuable help. Tutors know their clients well and are fully aware of their needs. They help clients to plan their work carefully when they meet with them each week to review their progress. College tutors and the subcontractor's staff attend evening and weekend events in support of clients. They accompany clients to interviews, and help them with transport.

63. The college has a good range of media studios, practical equipment, and information technology equipment. Art and design studios are clean, light and airy, with good storage, exhibition and display areas, ample lecture space and well-resourced practical workrooms. Photographic and media work areas are well laid out. The subcontractor has good-quality music facilities and information technology rooms. Clients can book these, using a rota system, to work on compositions and practical assessment pieces. The studios are open for long periods during the week, enabling clients to use them at times that fit in with their personal and domestic commitments. Clients derive full benefit from the facilities

and use them well. They are highly motivated and produce work of a high standard in which they take pride.

64. The college is constantly seeking appropriate work placements for clients, and has been successful in obtaining a few. However, most of these do not enable the client to carry out demanding work. College media tutors do not liaise with the placement team in the business development unit, or use their expertise to find clients suitable placements. They themselves have few useful industry links, and no experience in securing work placements. The lack of work placements frustrates the clients. Without appropriate work placements, they feel they are not making progress and increasing their employability, a primary goal of New Deal.

65. Although college tutors develop effective pastoral relationships with clients, their knowledge of New Deal is very limited. They do not understand how the programme works, and receive little information from the Employment Service about the operation of New Deal, and about the clients who are referred. Some are not able to offer clients informal advice and general guidance to clients on progression. Some tutors expressed doubt about the worth of New Deal and questioned whether the media department should be involved in the programme. Tutors have few links with the business development unit, and are unclear about the identity and role of training co-ordinators, who visit New Deal clients in the workplace. They do not seek advice from college colleagues, who are familiar with New Deal and able to provide them with valuable, up-to-date information on how the programme works.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

66. The college has an equal opportunities policy and code of practice which meets the requirements of its TEC and New Deal contract. The policy is reproduced in the staff handbook and is brought to the attention of trainees during their induction process. It is included in the student handbook given to all trainees, and is displayed in key positions on all college sites. The policy was last updated in December 1999. Additional procedures also cover harassment, disciplinary and grievance issues. The college has an equal opportunities manager whose role is to advise and support college staff and students in the upholding of equality of opportunity. An equal opportunities forum has been established to monitor the promotion of equal opportunities. An annual action plan is produced and progress in implementing it is monitored. Four per cent of all trainees and clients are from minority ethnic groups. Seven per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and one weakness for this area. Inspectors considered three of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and agreed with the finding that some action had been taken to address the weakness. The inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with the

grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of effective initiatives to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ successful action to attract trainees and clients from under-represented groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' low awareness of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ no continuous monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

67. The college has devised a wide range of initiatives to promote equal opportunities. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at meetings of senior managers in the college and at meetings of the business development unit. The equal opportunities forum has representatives from staff and students. The director of curriculum and operations attends this forum, and reports back to the manager of the business development unit. The college shows a commitment to equal opportunities training, for which there is a specific budget. A number of in-house training sessions and workshops have been offered to staff. An equal opportunities training day is planned for staff involved with New Deal clients.

68. The college's equal opportunities initiatives, although wide-ranging, are not always effectively managed to ensure that senior managerial decisions become fully operational, especially those affecting work-based training provision. A checklist has been written to help staff ensure that teaching methods and materials, and assessment methods, comply with equal opportunities legislation. However, there is no process for ensuring the checklist is used, or that it is effective. An equal opportunities newsletter is produced twice yearly. This gives essential information on relevant legislation and its application and serves a useful purpose in updating staff. It is not, however, circulated to the employers who are contracted to provide workplace training for NVQ trainees and New Deal clients. Publicity materials promote equality of opportunity through appropriate pictures and images. The materials do not, however, state that the college is committed to upholding equality of opportunity.

69. The college takes specific action to attract trainees and clients from under-represented groups. Managers are members of committees and groups within the local area which have a specific remit to address inequality and widen participation, and these include the Commission for Racial Equality. Training co-ordinators have had involvement with a mentoring initiative, which uses staff from minority ethnic backgrounds as role models for minority ethnic trainees and clients. The business development unit has established a marketing group and part of its brief is to look at ways of recruiting from under-represented groups. Some promotional and information leaflets are available in formats which meet the specific needs of trainees from different minority ethnic groups and with specific learning needs. The leaflets have been translated into five different languages and

are available in Braille and on tape for listening cassettes.

70. Some college sites are more accessible to disabled staff, students and trainees than others. The student/trainee handbook clearly identifies the parts of each site readily accessible to wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties. On two sites, learning centres are not easily accessible to wheelchair users. The college has facilities for helping people with impaired vision who have guide dogs.

71. Trainees are given a copy of the students' charter and handbook during their induction. The handbook states very clearly what is meant by unacceptable behaviour in relation to racism, sexism, harassment and other forms of discriminatory acts. The handbook is complemented by a code of behaviour. There is also statement of policy regarding substance use and misuse. The handbook outlines the complaints procedure. A leaflet explains the procedure in more detail. However, many trainees have little awareness and poor understanding of equal opportunities issues. There is no attempt to strengthen trainees' understanding of equal opportunities during off-the-job training. Some trainees are unclear about what they should do if they have a complaint about their training, or about a member of staff.

72. All employers are required to sign a subcontractor's agreement when a work placement is established. An employer without an equal opportunities policy is required to sign an undertaking to implement the college's policy. There is, however, no formal system for monitoring the implementation of equal opportunities in the workplace. The promotion of equal opportunities is not discussed on a regular basis with employers. The agenda to be covered during trainees' progress reviews contains an item on equal opportunities. During the reviews, however, equality of opportunity is only mentioned in the vaguest of terms and in a way that neither strengthens trainees' understanding of equal opportunities nor encourages them to discuss any discrimination or unfair treatment they might have experienced.

Trainee support

Grade 2

73. All training co-ordinators at the college are required to liaise with particular schools in the local community. They visit the schools to give talks on careers, attend career exhibitions and give advice to potential trainees. Trainees who are interested in a career in a particular vocational area are invited to information sessions at the college, which are held monthly between March and July. Parents and employers are also encouraged to attend these sessions. Trainees who apply for a place at the college have individual interviews and may undertake numeracy and literacy tests. They then attend interviews with prospective employers. If they are successful in obtaining a work placement, they are offered a place at the college. Unsuccessful trainees are given guidance on interview techniques. New Deal clients undergo aptitude tests and are interviewed at the Gateway stage by New Deal advisory staff. During their first week, trainees receive an induction to

the college. The induction is carried out over a four-day or two-day period, depending on the vocational area involved. Trainees also receive an induction into their workplace. During their training period, trainees are visited regularly at the workplace by college staff who formally review their progress. When trainees are nearing the completion of their training programme, they respond to a leaver's questionnaire and undergo checks to ensure that they have received all relevant certificates. Trainees' future plans are discussed at this stage and trainees receive advice on progression. The self-assessment report is not particularly self-critical. Of the three strengths identified in the self-assessment report, inspectors agreed with one, considered another to be no more than normal practice, and another more relevant to a generic area. They awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of college facilities
- ◆ well-resourced job-search room for new deal clients
- ◆ widely publicised celebration of trainees' achievements
- ◆ effective arrangements for providing additional learning support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment process
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews for most trainees and clients
- ◆ poor recreational facilities at Olive Grove site

74. The college has well-resourced learning centres on all its main sites, to which NVQ trainees have access. The one on the Castle site is arranged over two floors and brings together the learning resources of the library, space for private study, and computing facilities. The library has an extensive stock of vocationally relevant textbooks, a wide range of technical journals, and a collection of compact disks. There are 52 general computers which are networked and 12 give access to the Internet. Other equipment includes a digital camera, scanners and colour printers. Similar facilities exist in the learning centres on the other sites.

75. All trainees are automatically enrolled as members of the Students' Union and can use the union's leisure and recreational facilities. Trained and qualified counsellors are attached to each main centre within the college campus. Other support services offered include support for trainees who are dyslexic, mental health link workers and a careers guidance and advice service. College support staff also have links to outside agencies to which they can refer trainees.

76. New Deal clients have access to a job-search room, which they are timetabled to attend for at least one hour per week. The facility incorporates a training access point and information on jobs currently available. Two computerised guidance programme systems have been installed. One identifies clients' likes and dislikes and suggests possible careers for clients to match their aspirations. The other

programme is similar but is aimed at 18 to 24 year old clients in particular. One of the staff in attendance at the job-search room is on secondment from the Employment Service and advises clients on benefits and allowances, in addition to employment techniques and job opportunities. Staff give clients assistance in writing a curriculum vitae and copious records are kept of clients' efforts to secure work. Staff give clients encouraging and constructive advice. At one end of the room, details of clients' success in finding employment recently are displayed.

77. Trainees who have achieved success in the workplace, or in relation to their NVQ, have their achievements celebrated. Extensive coverage is given to trainees' success in TEC and the college's promotional material. Local newspapers recently reported the success of a woman engineer's achievement of an NVQ. The college recently provided training for the first silversmith trainees in the country to gain an NVQ at level 2. The Master Cutler formally presented the certificates to the trainees in Cutlers Hall. Also in attendance at the ceremony were local press, college representatives, civic dignitaries and employers. Other achievements of trainees are regularly recorded in the college's internal news sheet.

78. In some areas, trainees are allocated specialist one-to-one support. When college staff identify a potential problem regarding a trainee they complete a "cause for concern form". This is sent to a senior training co-ordinator who then directs it to the appropriate support section. This form and procedure are also used to monitor and record students' attendance and any discipline problems. There is a college service which provides signing for trainees with hearing impairments and another that provides support for dyslexic trainees. The service, however, is not always used promptly. For example, a trainee with previously identified problems associated with dyslexia who started an early years care programme in August 1999, had to wait until April 2000 before a specialist worker was provided to sit alongside the trainee.

79. Trainees take an initial assessment test in numeracy and communications. Part of the communications section, tests the trainee's ability to write a short essay. The test is used to determine whether trainees need additional support. One-to-one support is then provided for the trainee, and a record of this is entered on the trainee's individual training plan. There is no initial assessment of trainees' key skills or of occupational aptitude. Information on New Deal clients gathered during the Gateway is not always systematically passed on to college staff.

80. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out by training co-ordinators at the workplace every eight to 10 weeks. The reviews focus on pastoral care for the trainees rather than the extent of their progress towards achieving their NVQ. Trainees are not set clear, short-term targets during the reviews. In most cases, the employer representative is not present at the review but reads and signs the record of the review afterwards. There is space on the review form for a comment by the trainee, but this is usually filled in on their behalf by the training co-ordinator. There is no set procedure whereby trainees or employers automatically receive a copy of the progress review form.

81. There are no refectory facilities and no trainees' car parking facilities at one of the college's five sites, Olive Grove, where engineering, and plumbing and gas training occurs. Trainees are concerned at what they consider to be the high level of risk of having their cars damaged or stolen. They do not have enough time to use the main site refectory facilities and at breaktimes.

Management of training

Grade 3

82. Work-based training at the college is managed through the business development unit. A senior manager, who reports to one of the college's directors, has oversight of all the unit's business activities. She is assisted by one principal training co-ordinator and three senior training co-ordinators, who focus on the management of TEC and New Deal contracts, and the co-ordination of training provided by the employers and the college schools, respectively. Training co-ordinators are responsible for a defined group of trainees and clients, and for liaison with college, schools and employers. Staff activities follow working instructions which have been devised by the business development unit's staff, and these are continually revised and updated. There are regular meetings at various levels within the business development unit. The unit maintains links with external organisations through membership of the local TEC training providers' network, and the New Deal joint venture partnership. The business development manager has regular meetings with the Employment Service district manager to discuss progress in implementing New Deal. Staff represent the college at marketing events. Procedures for staff recruitment are detailed and aim to ensure that equality of opportunity is upheld. Staff receive induction to the college. Staff understand their responsibilities, and their lines of accountability. Teaching staff at the college and managers participate in a staff appraisal programme. There is no formal appraisal system for administrative staff, although one is being developed. In the meantime, all staff of the business development unit have regular one-to-one meetings with their line manager, during which they discuss progress towards reaching targets, as well as personal and professional aspirations and problems. Staff development needs are dictated by the priorities of the business development unit, and the objectives outlined on the business plan. Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a grade higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive structures for meetings and communications
- ◆ thorough process for selection and management of subcontractors
- ◆ effective action of managers to ensure improvement of training
- ◆ careful selection of appropriate work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little sharing of good practice
- ◆ inadequate management information systems
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

83. Staff meetings are held at regular intervals at all levels throughout the organisation. The meetings aim to keep staff well informed about college-wide and local factors requiring decision and action. There are good lines of communication between the college and external organisations. Staff report to colleagues on the outcome of external meetings and events. There are effective working relationships with such outside agencies as the local TEC, Employment Service, careers service, local authority and development agencies. The business development unit adopts innovative approaches to engage employers in the planning and development of work-based training. Engineering employers are invited to breakfast meetings and hairdressing salon owners are invited to demonstrations and events by professional hairdressing product manufacturers. Free training is offered to help workplace supervisors become qualified assessors and certificates are awarded to the employers and work-placement organisations most supportive of trainees. The college publishes and circulates throughout its catchment area an informative journal and other publications, which promote the benefits to be gained from education and training.

84. The arrangements for selection and management of subcontractors are particularly thorough. The college requires potential subcontractors to make a submission showing how their proposed programmes of work-based training meet clear college criteria. There are thorough initial checks on subcontractors' premises and resources, health and safety arrangements, policies and procedures, qualifications of staff, performance results, awarding body, TEC and financial reports. Prior to being subcontracted, selected subcontractors are risk-banded in respect of the training activity taking place and the viability of the organisation. The business development unit's quality assurance co-ordinator visits subcontractors considered a high risk, typically every two months. The quality assurance co-ordinator makes visits to subcontractors to audit the quality of their training and ensure it is in accordance with the contract and initial proposal specifications. Subcontractors are then required to draw up an action plan to rectify weaknesses. The college monitors subcontractors' progress in implementing the required action. The college's quality assurance co-ordinator makes monthly reports to the college business development unit. Decisions on whether to enter into further contracts with a subcontractor are made on the basis of the subcontractor's success in meeting the terms of previous contracts from year to year. The subcontracting arrangements are managed well. Some subcontractors had had their contracts withdrawn or were not used again, on the grounds of poor performance and their failure to comply with the contract fully.

85. Arrangements to find safe and appropriate work placements for trainees and clients work well. The college business development unit holds a data base of over 1000 employers with whom it negotiates for placements for trainees, New Deal

clients and full-time students of the college. The work experience co-ordinators are provided with information about trainees and clients gathered at their interviews. They then try to find work placements that suit the trainees and clients' particular need and provide them with the training they require. If they cannot find an employer on the database that meets the needs of a particular client or trainee, they open new lines of enquiry. When necessary, placements of a specialist nature are found such as those related to animal grooming or photography. Before trainees and clients take up a placement, work experience co-ordinators and a college health and safety officer visit the placement premises. Employers are advised of the on-the-job training requirements, contractual obligations and, of the necessity to have employer liability insurance, health and safety certification, and requisite policies such as those on wage structure, working hours, and equality of opportunity. The college will not use employers, unless these criteria are met in full. All employers receive a report from the college following the initial visit. Those who do not come up to the required standard can ask to be re-assessed. Once trainees and clients take up a placement, college work-experience officers monitor its quality when they visit trainees and clients to carry out their progress reviews. Issues of concern are immediately brought to the attention of the work-placement co-ordinators and health and safety officer through written reports.

86. Some good work-based training practices are shared in an informal way by staff from various sections in the college. However, there is no systematic process for identifying best practice. Opportunities are missed to disseminate details of training practices that are particularly successful.

87. In some occupational areas, staff have made a real effort to maintain links with all involved in training. They have tried to ensure that on- and off-the-job training is co-ordinated, assessment is carefully planned, and progress reviews are properly structured. In the main, however, on- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated systematically. A significant proportion of employers are unaware of training frameworks and the content of the training programme followed by the trainee in placement. Not all employers are left a record of visits by work-placement co-ordinators or tutor/assessors. Records of visits that are left with the employer seldom give clear indications of how the employer can plan trainees' work schedules and skills development in preparation for assessment or learning that takes place at college. Sometimes, trainees are required to demonstrate skills they use in their daily work activities on off-the-job college training days, for the purpose of assessment.

88. Current management information systems in the college are inadequate. Data is not easily accessible to managers, teaching and support staff to enable them to produce accurate trend analysis or reports to assist decision-making. The business development unit found it particularly difficult to prepare reliable data for inspectors on trainees and clients' retention and achievement rates. A great deal of time is spent converting data into statistics manually. The college has recently introduced management information systems. It is too soon to know whether these are proving effective.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

89. The business development unit follows the college's policies and procedures for quality assurance. It has designed additional systems and work practices specific to work-based learning. Within the business development unit, the quality assurance co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring the performance of subcontractors. Since the original inspection, her role has also been extended to cover the performance of the vocational areas within the college which provide aspects of training and assessment for work-based learners. Quality audits are carried out on all subcontractors. The self-assessment report was not updated for the reinspection but a progress report on the action plan from the original inspection was produced. This did not identify any new strengths or weaknesses.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no specific quality assurance process for training and assessment in the college
- ◆ no systematic collection of feedback from employers
- ◆ failure to apply quality assurance systems to the workplace
- ◆ weak self assessment process

90. Some progress has been made with regard to each of these weaknesses, but it is insufficient. Systems have been introduced for monitoring work-based training, both in the college and the workplaces, but they are not working effectively. Some methods have been developed for gathering feedback from employers, but these do not cover all employers.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough monitoring of New Deal subcontractors
- ◆ systematic evaluation of teaching in college
- ◆ good use of feedback from learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of established employer feedback systems
- ◆ lack of established quality assurance systems for training
- ◆ insufficient evaluation in the self assessment process

91. The quality assurance co-ordinator has produced detailed procedures for monitoring the performance of New Deal subcontractors. Audit visits are carried out every two to six months, often unannounced. The frequency of audit is based on the type and size of the contract and on the results of previous checks. The college checks both the subcontractors' performance against its contractual requirements and the quality of the clients' training experience. Detailed records are kept of these visits, using standard documents. Action points are agreed with

the subcontractor and the quality assurance co-ordinator ensures that these are followed up. Subcontractors value the college's thorough approach and find college staff helpful.

92. The college has a thorough programme for observing teaching. Copies of the report, produced each time a staff member observes a teacher, are given to the business development unit. Half of the college's teaching staff are observed each year. Observation is carried out by other teaching staff from the college, who have been trained for this role. Following observation, staff receive written feedback. If problems are identified, the observer recommends that the member of staff concerned discusses them with their line manager, or, if appropriate, with another specialist who will be able to help them to improve.

93. The feedback from learners is analysed and taken into account in decision-making by the college's management. The college's governors have used this feedback when monitoring the quality of college training. The business development unit manually collates formal and informal feedback from learners. It takes this feedback into account when making adjustments and changes to the training. Training co-ordinators seek feedback from learners during progress reviews and deal with any concerns promptly. One New Deal client, placed with a subcontractor, stated that the help she was receiving with jobsearch was not adequate. New arrangements were made for her to attend the college's specialist jobsearch centre.

94. At the original inspection there was no systematic collection of feedback from employers involved in work-based training. The informal contacts made by training co-ordinators during progress review visits tended to focus on individual learners rather than the overall quality of training. The college is developing a more formal approach, including a questionnaire specifically for employers. However, this questionnaire has not yet been drawn up. The business development unit staff plan to redesign the progress review documents to encourage comments from employers. Some parts of the college have set up regular employer meetings, but attendance by employers has been erratic. The college's senior managers have recently agreed to give the business development unit more responsibility for liaising with employers. It is too early to say how useful any of these changes will be.

95. There is still little monitoring of the quality of training taking place in the workplace. There are no procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of learners' progress reviews or, in most cases, of work-based assessment. The business development unit's main contact with work-based trainers is through the college's training co-ordinators. Some training co-ordinators lack the specific occupational expertise required to evaluate the quality of the training effectively. Systems are being developed to improve quality assurance in the workplace. The new systems and procedures are not fully understood by all staff and are not yet operating in the workplace. It is too early to say how effective they will be.

96. The vocational areas of the college are now regarded as subcontractors of the business development unit. They are, therefore, subject to audit visits from the quality assurance co-ordinator. However, this system is not yet fully established. Three audit visits were carried out in June 2001 in the occupational areas due to be reinspected. This process did not reveal many of the weaknesses found by inspectors and did not focus sufficiently on the learners' experience. However, it encouraged the business development unit to make college staff more aware of the needs of work-based learners. In several areas of the college the key skills required by learners for framework completion are being overlooked. This problem is now being dealt by the business development unit, through contract review meetings and quality audit. In childcare, concerns about the quality of training provided by the college have led to the suspension of recruitment. Monitoring of the college's training provision is incomplete, as audits have not yet been carried out in most occupational areas.

97. The self-assessment process is not self-critical enough, despite most staff having attended a workshop on the subject. The action plan created after the original inspection was updated in March 2001 in preparation for reinspection. A brief document was written describing the college's progress since the original inspection. This lacks detail and does not contain new strengths and weaknesses. The grades given for reinspected areas are too high in three of the four areas reinspected. The document contains very few evaluative comments and lacks critical analysis of the college's position and progress.

98. The college's internal verification procedures meet the requirements of awarding bodies and are satisfactory. While assessment practice is good in some occupational areas, it remains poor in others.