

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION
REPORT OCTOBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
OCTOBER 2001

Lakes College
(formerly West Cumbria
College)



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Lakes College (formerly West Cumbria College) was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities, management of training 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 equal opportunities, management of training 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).

Lakes College offers satisfactory training in hair and beauty. On-the-job training resources are good. Retention and achievement rates which were identified as key weaknesses at the original inspection, have improved and are now satisfactory. Since the original inspection, the equal opportunities policy and procedures have been revised. Staff and learners have received equal opportunities training and their understanding of equal opportunities issues has improved. There is still insufficient monitoring, however, of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. Trainee support in college and the workplace is effective. Management of training has improved since the original inspection and is now satisfactory. Staff have participated in a comprehensive and effective staff development programme. The college now has a key skills unit, and eight training advisers teach and assess key skills. Learners, however, make slow progress towards the completion of key skills units. Quality assurance has improved since the original inspection and is now satisfactory. The views of learners, employers, parents and staff are sought and acted on, in order to improve training. The college now has a range of quality assurance procedures and these cover work-based learning. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of key processes such as induction and reviews of learners' progress.

GRADES

| OCCUPATIONAL AREAS | GRADE |
|--------------------|-------|
| Hair & beauty | 3 |

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

| REINSPECTION | GRADE |
|------------------------|-------|
| Equal opportunities | 3 |
| Management of training | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 3 |

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide and effective range of trainee support
- ◆ opportunities for achievement of additional, vocationally relevant qualifications
- ◆ effective reviews for most learners
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ good staff development programme
- ◆ effective action on feedback to improve training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no key skills training for some learners from the outset
- ◆ insufficient quality assurance of work-based learning

INTRODUCTION

1. Lakes College (formerly West Cumbria College) is a medium sized further education college serving West Cumbria, an area where the population is approximately 160,000. It was formed in 1969 and renamed Lakes College in 2001. Since the original inspection, the college has moved to a newly constructed building in Lillyhall. The first students attended the new college from September 2001. With the exception of construction training, all training provided by the college takes place at this site. Construction training is carried out on a separate site nearby. Lakes College has bus links with the outlying areas. Approximately 21 per cent of the population live in rurally isolated areas.

2. Lakes College employs 269 full- and part-time members of academic and support staff. The management structure of the college is made up of a governing body, a principal, a deputy principal and two assistant principals. There are five departments in the college, each covering a range of different occupational learning opportunities. The college's business development manager is responsible for the management of government-funded work-based learning. She reports directly to the deputy principal. The college has contracts with Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Four staff carry out administrative duties and deal with financial claims to support the contract with the LSC. Sixteen staff members in the business development unit carry out assessment of learners in the workplace, learners' progress reviews and most off-the-job training. They are supported by college lecturers who provide some off-the-job training.

3. Around 4.3 per cent of the college's funding comes from its work-based learning contracts with the LLSC. Work-based learning expanded considerably in the past year when the college's contract was extended and 12 staff from another local training provider joined the college. At the time of the original inspection, there were 27 learners in government funded work-based training, and now there are 147. At the time of the original inspection, 81 per cent of learners were employed, but this proportion has now decreased to 25 per cent. Of these, seven are advanced modern apprentices, 102 are foundation modern apprentices and 38 are following other programmes. Eighty-four have additional learning and/or social needs. The range of programmes offered has expanded considerably in the past year and now includes customer service, welding, retail and joinery, in addition to hairdressing, engineering, sport and recreation and business administration, which were offered at the time of the original inspection. The college offers training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3. The college is a subcontractor to a national training organisation implementing New Deal in Cumbria. Currently, 20 clients are on the full-time education and training option of New Deal and four are on the employment option.

4. A key feature of the economy of West Cumbria is its dependence on the activities of a few large organisations in the manufacturing and nuclear fuel sectors. From 1986-1996, 18 per cent of jobs were lost from these organisations.

5. Unemployment rates in some areas of Cumbria are consistently higher than the national average. In Workington, the unemployment rates for men and women are 7.9 per cent and 3.1 per cent, respectively, and the overall rate is the highest in Cumbria. In some areas such as Northside, Westfield and Salterbeck, the unemployment rate for men is in excess of 13 per cent. Unemployment in west Cumbria has fallen in recent years. At the time of the original inspection, it was 3.5 per cent, similar to the regional average of 3.6 per cent and the national average of 3.5 per cent. At reinspection, it had fallen to 3.2 per cent, lower than the regional average of 3.7 per cent and was just slightly higher than the national average of 3 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up less than 1 per cent of the local population.

6. In Cumbria, in 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, this increased proportion went up to 50 per cent and the national average 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. The first self-assessment report to include the quality framework of the Training Standards Council (TSC), was submitted to Enterprise Cumbria Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in August 1999. A second report was submitted in August 2000. The director of human resources and quality assurance oversees the college's self-assessment process. The self-assessment for work-based learning involved staff at all levels across the relevant curriculum areas. The college was inspected by the TSC at the same time as the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) reinspected management and quality assurance. Learners' numbers were low in administration, care and hospitality and these were not inspected as separate areas. Following the original inspection, the college drew up an action plan to rectify weaknesses which the inspectors had identified. Prior to the reinspection, all staff involved in work-based learning were involved in producing a report on the implementation of this action plan. This showed how strengths identified in the original inspection had been built upon and how weaknesses had been rectified. Staff produced a summary of current strengths, weaknesses and grades, for the three generic areas being reinspected. Inspectors agreed with the grades given in the college's report.

8. For the original inspection, a team of three TSC inspectors spent a total of 11 days at the college in October 2000. Inspectors visited 10 employers, and interviewed 20 learners and 10 workplace supervisors. Inspectors also carried out interviews with 28 of the college's teaching, management and support staff. A broad range of documents was examined, including NVQ portfolios and learners' files. Inspectors also reviewed assessment records, learners' review documents and external verifiers' reports. Five training sessions were observed and graded as shown in the table below.

9. For the reinspection in October 2001, a team of three ALI inspectors spent a total of 12 days in the college. Inspectors interviewed 17 learners and visited and interviewed eight employers. Inspectors also carried out 28 interviews with the college's teaching, management and support staff. They looked at NVQ portfolios, learners' files, assessment records, individual learning plans, learners' review documents and internal and external verifiers' reports. Inspectors observed four reviews of learners' progress, one tutorial, one work placement monitoring visit and two assessments one of which was internally verified. They observed three training sessions and the grades for these are given in the table below. Reinspection was carried out using criteria from the *Common Inspection Framework*.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

| | GRADE 1 | GRADE 2 | GRADE 3 | GRADE 4 | GRADE 5 | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Business administration | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Sport & leisure | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Hair & beauty | | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |
| Total | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at reinspection

| | GRADE 1 | GRADE 2 | GRADE 3 | GRADE 4 | GRADE 5 | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|---------|----------|
| Construction | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Engineering (welding) | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Key skills | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Total | | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

Grade 3

10. There are 18 trainees in this area. Twelve foundation modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2 with five advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3. One New Deal client is on the employment option. This client attends college for one-day each week and is employed in a salon on the other four days. She is working towards an NVQ in hairdressing at level 2. Hairdressing training is offered at one of the college's sites at Lillyhall. All modern apprentices attend college for off-the-job training for one day each week. They spend time in the college's commercial salon to practise their skills. Trainees are also assessed at the salon. Theory and key skills sessions are also included during the day at college. Trainees spend the remaining four days in local commercial salons where they are employed or placed by the college. Some of the trainees receive on-the-job training in their workplace. All trainees have the opportunity to take additional qualifications offered by the college.

11. The self-assessment report was largely accurate and correctly identified three strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of on-the-job resources
- ◆ effective trainees' progress reviews
- ◆ early assessment opportunities for most trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ unsatisfactory training for advanced modern apprenticeships

12. Trainees are placed or employed in good commercial salons in the local and surrounding rural areas. Salon staff are well qualified and experienced. Some of the salons provide training days, when they often invite experts into the salon. Trainees are given ample opportunity to observe these experts at work. Most trainees also observe and use up-to-date hairdressing techniques in the workplace. Some observe advanced fashion work on a regular basis. Trainees are highly motivated by the standard of work to be attained. Trainees learn new skills which may be used in competition work at a later date. Specific training opportunities are also organised by salons and the college with suppliers of hairdressing products. College staff are well qualified and attend regular seminars and hair shows to update their current working practices. The college's hairdressing tutors maintain their occupational experience by working in the college's commercial salon and spend 25 hours each year working in local salons. The new college building, which will be opened in September 2001, has both a training salon and a commercial salon.

13. Trainees' progress is consistently and effectively monitored through regular reviews carried out by the training manager. Review meetings are booked every eight to 10 weeks, when a thorough discussion takes place between the trainee, employer and training manager. Reviews are held more frequently if required. The next formal review date is always booked before the member of staff leaves the salon. Trainees are fully involved in the process, identifying and agreeing their own short-term targets. Employers help trainees to achieve their short-term targets. In most instances, the review meeting coincides with a planned work-based assessment. The assessor keeps the employer and trainee fully aware of the results of assessments. The review does not, however, comment on progress towards the achievement of key skills. In addition to the formal review, trainees also discuss their progress in college with their personal tutor. A regular report on trainees' progress in college is sent to the employer and, where trainees are under the age of 18, to their parents or guardians. A feedback sheet is completed and attached.

14. A high percentage of new trainees complete several assessments in shampooing and styling hair in the first month of training. For those trainees on level 3 NVQs, most of the requirements for at least two units of the qualification have been assessed in their first month at college. This includes the completion of detailed assignment work, together with the collection of photographic evidence. All trainees are introduced to the NVQ logbook during their first week at college. These are referred to continually during theory and practical sessions.

15. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed. At the beginning of training, the range of duties at work is not taken into account when agreeing on the individual training plan and targets with the trainee and employer. The targets are based on the college's schemes of work. Some trainees are more advanced in

cutting or colouring techniques owing to the work being carried out in their salons, but these skills are not assessed until the college theory training has taken place. For some trainees, progress is slow. The college runs a commercial salon daily but client numbers are low. There are currently no work-based assessors in local salons offering work placements. Several of the work-based supervisors have shown an interest in assessor awards but this training has not yet taken place. Insufficient time is allowed for college staff to carry out assessments in the workplace. Insufficient use is made of naturally occurring evidence at work to support the achievement of key skills.

16. Statistics for trainees on other work-based training show declining achievement rates from 100 per cent achieving NVQs in 1997-98 to 78 per cent in 1999-2000. The latter figure is higher than the TEC's average of 63 per cent achievement of NVQs. The foundation modern apprenticeship training is fairly new with 20 trainees starting since 1999-2000. To date, 12 trainees are still in training, the remainder having left without any qualifications. This represents a retention rate of around 60 per cent. Training for advanced modern apprentices is poor. Out of 26 trainees who started since 1997-98, only five remain in training. Only three of these trainees have completed their individual training plan. NVQ achievement is good, and at 90 per cent is significantly higher than the TEC's average of 74 per cent. The group has been combined with a full-time college hairdressing course and progress is maintained at the same pace as these full-time students. Trainees' portfolios are poor, mainly consisting of a logbook, with very little evidence of individual work.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

17. The college has an equal opportunities policy, which is reviewed annually. There is an action plan with targets for the promotion of equal opportunities. There are also anti-harassment and disability policies and a disability statement. All policies are available to staff, learners and employers. The equal opportunities policy and anti-harassment and bullying statements are prominently displayed on notice boards around the college site and included in the student handbook and the students, employers and parents' charters. There are policies covering student admissions, complaints and learning support. Responsibility for the promotion of equal opportunities lies with the assistant principal of resources who chairs a cross-college advisory committee on equal opportunities, which was established in April 2000. Data, in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and disability, are collected systematically across the college. Information relating to student admissions is also collated. The college is located in new, purpose-built premises with wide corridors and lifts suitable for wheelchair users. The college has equipment to help people with hearing impairments and chairs designed to aid quick evacuation from the building, of people with restricted mobility. Fluorescent strips are strategically placed to enable people with visual impairment to move safely around the

building. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item on management meetings.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees and employers
- ◆ late implementation of equal opportunities strategy

18. Lakes College has introduced several strategies which have partly rectified the first weakness. Changes have been made to the learners' induction procedure. Strategies have been developed to engage work placement providers in the promotion and safeguarding of equality of opportunity in the workplace. There is, however, still insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. The second weakness has now been rectified. The strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities has now been implemented. Promotion of equal opportunities now has greater priority across the college. All policies relating to equality of opportunity are fully developed and operational. Changes have been made to recruitment procedures to ensure that they are objective and consistent across occupational areas. Staff development training related to equal opportunities has been implemented as a priority. Inspectors agreed with the findings of the most recent self-assessment report and the weakness related to the insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective response to learners' complaints
- ◆ successful promotion of equal opportunities in the college

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

19. The college has a comprehensive complaints procedure. It prefers situations to be resolved as early as possible. Problems are often resolved while still at grievance level and personal tutors are aware of their roles. The college tutorial system enables learners to meet their personal tutors on an individual basis, once a month. Guidance has now been formulated for staff on how they can help personal tutors diffuse problems before they lead to anyone making a formal complaint. Concerns relating to off-the-job training are fed into occupational team meetings and problems are dealt with effectively. Complaints of a personal nature are often dealt with during this same process. When the personal tutor system fails to resolve a situation, the complaints procedure is followed systematically with tutors formally registering the complaint with the principal's administrative staff. All complaints are acknowledged, investigated and acted upon within tight timescales. In most cases, a satisfactory result is achieved. Learners are given information about the complaints procedure during their induction. Many complaints are resolved successfully. Action has been taken on learners' complaints about the

high cost of bus fares and low number of buses. There are now more frequent buses and fares have been reduced.

20. The college promotes equal opportunities successfully. In each occupational area, staff identify relevant equal opportunity issues which may arise. An external consultant helps staff to identify ways of helping learners understand the importance of equal opportunities through their programme. Targets are set and progress towards reaching them is monitored. A target has been set for raising awareness of the importance of equal opportunities on the part of 90 per cent of staff and governors. A comprehensive staff development programme is under way to help the college achieve this goal. A target to reduce the number of learners transferring from one programme to another, by 10 per cent, has also been agreed. Changes to the recruitment and induction programmes have taken place. All applicants are offered an interview. New learners are brought into the college for half a day before their programme starts. Learners are given initial tests and interviews early enough to enable staff to identify any needs for additional learning support, or social problems, they may have. Ninety-five per cent of the joinery learners require additional learning support.

21. Good links exist with external agencies including those which help people with sight and hearing impairments, the local dyslexia association and the regional addictive behaviour service. Several work-based learners have made use of these services. One student with sight and mobility impairment, has joined the equal opportunities advisory group and has carried out a survey of the accessibility of various goals of the college to persons with mobility problems. Key areas of the college which should be made more accessible have been identified and plans have been drawn up for carrying out the improvements needed. The men's forum, set up prior to the original inspection, has made a video which aims to encourage men to go into care work.

22. There is insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Staff have attended training workshops on equal opportunities but still lack the confidence to discuss equal opportunities with employers. When visiting learners in the workplace or carrying out their progress reviews, training advisers do not know what questions to ask them. There is space on the progress review documents for staff to record issues or concerns learners have related to equal opportunities, but few such issues are discussed or recorded. Employers were invited to attend an equal opportunities workshop, but their response was poor and the event was postponed. All employers receive the college's equal opportunities policy and government leaflets of topical interest. The equal opportunities advisory committee is keen to monitor equal opportunities data. Data on gender, ethnicity and disability are collected about learners when they join and leave training programmes. Although analysis is made of these data, little use is made of the findings to identify ways of improving the promotion of equal opportunities. In some marketing literature, there are positive images of learners from some groups under-represented on programmes. Such images are to be included in promotional materials for work-based learning. Advertisements, however, do not highlight the

accessibility of areas of the college to people with physical disabilities.

Trainee support

Grade 2

23. Training is promoted to potential trainees through a newly formed business development department. Trainees are given impartial advice from a careers advisor who has recently been employed by the college. All trainees are assessed on entry for basic skills to determine whether additional learning support is required. Those requiring support are interviewed by learning-support staff who discuss and agree on additional training requirements. Trainees receive an induction to the college and to their training. The induction takes place over two days and is carried out by the course tutor. The induction deals with issues of health and safety, fire and evacuation procedures, college policies and the range of support services available. Posters and leaflets displayed throughout the college also promote these services to trainees. Trainees receive a further induction when they are placed with an employer. Professional counselling services are available to trainees throughout their training. Reviews of trainees' progress are conducted according to contractual requirements and involve their employers.

24. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They also identified additional strengths and one weakness regarding insufficient career guidance and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear strategic focus on trainee support
- ◆ access to a wide range of support services
- ◆ good staff resources for trainee support
- ◆ additional, vocationally relevant qualifications
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' success

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ insufficient career guidance

25. One of the strategic aims of the college is to improve the experience and achievement of students and staff. There is clear managerial responsibility for trainee support. The director of student and learning services has overall responsibility. He is assisted by teams of staff in student services who are set clear and measurable targets relating to trainee support. A range of performance indicators is recorded, including time-bound targets for trainee support issues to be dealt with. All trainees, including those who attend college on day-release from work, are given access to learning resource services, impartial advice and

guidance, and initial assessment of basic and key skills. All trainees are interviewed within 15 days from their first contact with the college.

26. All trainees can use a range of support services for their personal development and achievement. Where additional learning support is identified through the initial assessment of basic skills, the course tutor highlights this for the attention of the learning support manager. The trainee is interviewed within one week. An individual programme of additional support is negotiated and is required to be put into place within two weeks. Support is often given by a learning-support assistant during classroom sessions. The occupational expertise of the learning-support assistant is matched to the trainee's vocational programme. Other examples of support available for trainees include workshops for literacy and numeracy, and, in exceptional situations, individual tutorials can be arranged. The college offers financial support to help with travel costs. It also operates a programme which focuses on a range of extra-curricular activities including weight management and aromatherapy.

27. Staff involved in trainee support have an excellent range of qualifications and experience. The college's counselling team is made up of full- and part-time staff who are qualified in counselling skills and come from a variety of backgrounds such as a district nurse and a social worker. Counsellors aim to address urgent referrals within 20 minutes of being notified and within 24 hours for those considered to be non-urgent cases. All counsellors carry a personal pager to assist with response times. An external professional counsellor supervises the counselling service and meets with individual counsellors to enable them to share issues and seek advice and guidance where appropriate. Counsellors make use of external advice agencies where specialist help is required, for example, drug-related issues, eating disorders or sexual abuse.

28. Many trainees achieve qualifications in addition to those detailed in their individual training plan. Examples include administration trainees who have achieved extra certificates in word processing, computer literacy, information technology and audio typing. Hairdressing trainees take additional courses in ear piercing, applying cosmetics and basic health and safety. Care and hospitality trainees have also attended additional short-courses to enhance their NVQ and theory training.

29. Trainees' achievements are widely acknowledged. In the hairdressing department, trainees and their families attend an annual awards evening to celebrate the success of those who have completed their qualifications. Local newspapers publicise the presentation of their certificates. Other examples of recognition of success include clients on the New Deal training whose achievements are acknowledged in college publicity materials and the local press.

30. The initial assessment of key skills conducted by the college is limited to those of information technology and application of number. Existing arrangements fail to identify the potential level of key skills. The initial assessment of basic and key

skills does not influence the training recorded in the trainees' individual training plan.

31. There is no systematic approach to ensure that trainees who are placed with employers receive appropriate guidance on other employment opportunities. The college's careers advisor relies on course tutors to be aware of their trainees' situations, and referral is not systematic. Currently, New Deal clients are not receiving job-search activity or assistance with development of their curricula vitae, interview techniques or completion of application forms and letter writing for jobs.

Management of training

Grade 3

32. The college has a mission statement, strategic plan and a set of key strategic aims. The strategy is translated into operational plans for each area of the college. The college takes account of work-based learning in the strategic plan. The business development manager manages work-based learning and her business development team monitors the local LSC contracts. The business development team has expanded from five employees in April 2000, to 21 in October 2001, and includes a contracts co-ordinator, 15 training advisers, a placement adviser and four administrators. The work-based learning provision has grown rapidly in the past year and the college's contract has been extended to cover some learners and staff from another provider. The number of learners has increased in the past year from 27 to 147. A placement officer develops initial contacts with employers. The training advisers plan and organise off-the-job training and carry out assessments and reviews of learners' progress. The business development manager and the contracts co-ordinator monitor learners' progress. The business development manager is a member of the academic board and attends monthly meetings of heads of departments. Procedures and working instructions have been developed by staff involved in work-based learning. The college was accredited as an Investor in People in May 2001. Learners can begin their programme at any time of year and training and assessment continue throughout the college holidays.

At the original inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ late implementation of key skills training
- ◆ insufficient use of management information

33. Since the original inspection, Lakes College has made satisfactory progress in dealing with the weaknesses identified in the original inspection. Learners are now assessed regularly in the workplace by visiting training advisers. Employers have their roles explained to them by the placement officer and the training adviser. Employers receive a useful pack which explains NVQ and key skills requirements. A service level agreement establishes what employers and the college must, respectively, provide for learners. Employers are involved in the formal review of

learners' progress and are invited in to the college to see the facilities available to learners. Some employers, however, still lack understanding of learners' programmes. A key skills teaching unit has been established in the college. There are now scheduled sessions on the key skills of information technology (IT), communication and working with numbers. Few learners, however, achieve their key skills awards. Data are now readily available to help staff monitor learners' progress, retention and achievement. This information is discussed at fortnightly meetings between the business development manager and the training co-ordinator and between the training co-ordinator and the training advisers. Reasons why learners leave their programmes early are sought and analysed. Inspectors considered the six new strengths identified in the revised self-assessment report to be covered by their own broader statement of strengths. They agreed with one of the two weaknesses but some of the weaknesses identified during the original inspection had not been fully rectified. They awarded the same grade as that given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective strategic management
- ◆ thorough staff appraisal system
- ◆ good staff development programme

GOOD PRACTICE

Colour photographs of learners performing tasks and demonstrating competences required for NVQ units in welding, are prominently displayed in the welding workshop. With the photographs are clear, brief statements explaining what learners must do to achieve their NVQ. A list of learners who achieved their NVQ and where they found work is also displayed, to help motivate learners.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no assessment of some learners' key skills from outset of training
- ◆ poor understanding of NVQs and key skills among most employers
- ◆ insufficient joinery resources

34. Strategic planning and management are effective. There is a long-term, 10-year plan. Projected growth and development are taken into account in the systematic strategic planning cycle. This covers training funded through the local LSC. All staff are encouraged to make a contribution to their occupational area and their department's proposal for the planning process, using a critical self-assessment process. The senior management team takes these contributions into account in the draft strategic plan. All staff are invited to comment on the draft plan and changes are made where appropriate. The final version of the strategic plan is approved by the governing body. All staff are fully involved in the process and are aware of the operational plan for their department. A separate operational plan has been developed for work-based learning. The college has responded efficiently and flexibly to the demands made upon it by the significant growth in its contract to provide work-based learning. Learners and staff have received help and support in the period during which the contract has grown and a move to new premises has taken place. Throughout this period, staff turnover has been low and few learners have left their training programme early. The open style of management is effective.

35. The college has a good staff review, appraisal and development scheme. This

was established in 1999 and involves all full- and part-time staff. New work-based trainers serve a probationary period during which they receive thorough reviews of their performance and have monthly meetings with their line manager. The staff review, appraisal and development system operates on an annual cycle with a minimum of three-monthly reviews. This takes account of the college's strategic plan, operational plans and the needs of the individual. Each member of staff has an 'individual action plan' which clearly outlines their targets and objectives for the year. All staff are positive about the plan and are fully aware of their role in the organisation.

36. New staff receive a good induction to the college and their new job roles. New job profiles have been developed for work-based trainers. The training needs of the expanding staff team have been carefully identified and successfully addressed. Most new staff have participated in eight training events in the past six months including training in equal opportunities, health and safety, key skills, assessment and internal verification. Several are working towards qualifications in teaching adults. Training is evaluated for its effectiveness. Future training requirements are identified.

37. The college has increased the number of work-based trainers able to teach and assess key skills to eight. Some learners, however, still do not receive key skills training and assessment throughout their programmes. Between 1997-98 and the original inspection, only four of the 47 learners who left training, achieved key skills units and completed their programme. These learners were in the occupational areas of care and hairdressing. Since the original inspection, only two learners have achieved all the key skills units needed to enable them to complete their programme. These learners are in the occupational area of administration. Several learners on hairdressing and business administration programmes have passed their key skills tests but are making slow progress towards completion of their portfolios. Some joinery learners, however, have completed their portfolios. Learners usually cross-reference evidence in their portfolios to the key skills units towards the end of their programme. Many learners do not fully understand key skills. The college is now producing assignments and teaching material for key skills which are relevant to learners' occupational areas. The learners' achievement rate for NVQs is satisfactory. Of 15 learners who began a programme in 2000-01 leading to an NVQ in welding, nine have achieved a qualification and one is still in training. Retention and achievement rates on the hair programme were low at the time of the original inspection. Now, all learners on the hair programme have achieved their NVQ.

38. Most employers are unclear about key skills and the NVQ process. Many are willing to release learners to attend off-the-job training sessions. They seldom, however, provide witness testimonies to the learners' acquisition of competences, or observe and evaluate learners' performance in the workplace. In a few instances, the college has been able to influence employers to rotate learners' duties in order that the learners may carry out a wide range of tasks and develop a broad range of requisite NVQ competences. In the occupational area of sport and

recreation, learners and employers are not fully aware of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.

39. The joinery accommodation is too small to accommodate all the joinery learners. Learners are spending too long in the classroom and not enough time in the workshop developing practical skills. There are not enough staff to supervise all joinery learners adequately. The college identified this problem in its self-assessment report.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

40. The college uses the quality assurance system that was introduced in October 1999. Fourteen cross-college standards and supporting quality assurance indicators, cover all aspects of college activity. The assistant principal of resources has overall responsibility for the quality assurance systems of the college, including work-based learning. She is supported by a quality assurance manager and a quality assurance administrator, both of whom have other responsibilities in the college. The assistant principal of resources is ultimately responsible for establishing, implementing and maintaining the management of quality assurance procedures, in line with college policies. Within each of the curriculum areas, the quality assurance leaders assume responsibility for supporting quality assurance and internal audit. Eight staff have been trained as internal auditors and another five are working towards completion of their qualification. The quality assurance manuals cover work-based learning and include work instructions. The quality assurance manual is distributed across the college and is also accessible through the college intranet. All staff are involved in producing the college's annual self-assessment report, which covered work-based learning. A short report giving strengths, weaknesses, supporting evidence and grades for equal opportunities, management of training and quality assurance was produced for reinspection.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ quality assurance system not fully established
- ◆ lack of focus on work-based training procedures in the quality assurance system
- ◆ incomplete implementation of cross-college internal verification policy

41. Since the original inspection the college has remedied the first weakness successfully by developing key quality assurance procedures for work-based learning. Flow charts and example documents explaining these procedures are issued to staff to help them carry out their jobs. The college has developed and extended its quality assurance system since the original inspection but it is not yet being fully used by all staff and there is still insufficient monitoring of work-based learning. An internal verification policy has been developed but internal verification is still a weakness.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough evaluation of external verification reports
- ◆ extensive programme of college-based training observations
- ◆ good use of feedback on the quality of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of work-based learning
- ◆ no fully established internal verification system

GOOD PRACTICE

Lakes College has sought good practice in work-based training from other external organisations, both private training providers and other further education colleges. Staff have learnt from this good practice and recognise what they need to do to improve their own work. They have begun to implement new quality assurance procedures to cover key aspects of training.

42. External verifiers' reports are thoroughly evaluated by the quality assurance administrator. Reports are systematically copied to the principal, the quality assurance manager and the appropriate head of department. A database of action points has been developed. Very clear records are kept to monitor the action points. A summary of the actions taken or still outstanding is reported to the standards and quality assurance sub-committee of the academic board, which is chaired by a member of the senior management team. There is very close monitoring of the external verification of qualifications. Good practice identified by external verifiers is displayed on the 'good news' board for staff.

43. The college operates a comprehensive system for observing teaching in the classroom. Staff are observed by trained observers on three occasions during the year. Originally, staff were trained as observers by an external organisation. The college now has its own system for accrediting observers. Staff wishing to become an observer, have to make a formal application and go through a selection process. The team of observers has been expanded to include all members of the senior management team, the quality assurance manager, the business development manager and the head of student support. The college is also in the process of recruiting six new observers. Once they are in post, this will bring the total number of observers to 30. New observers are closely monitored to make sure they follow set procedures. The observers give grades for lessons and they notify the teaching and learning quality assurance manager of these. The teaching and learning quality assurance manager then draws up a grading profile for individual teachers and groups of staff. The training needs of staff across the college are taken into account in the action plans for individual teachers. The quality assurance administrator monitors progress in implementing these action plans. The staff development manager has instigated a staff-mentoring scheme whereby new staff are supported by an experienced and capable existing member of staff.

44. Good use is made of feedback on the quality of training. Questionnaires are sent to learners, employers, placement providers and parents asking for their views. Questionnaires are issued to learners at the start, mid-way through, and at end of training. A summary of responses is sent to the training adviser, course manager, head of department and the senior management team, and recommendations for improvements are made. For example, construction learners identified that they did not have access to drinks or snacks in their building, so dispensing machines were installed. Additional tuition has been provided for

learners who require assistance with mathematics or specialist training to help them with their jobs. Parents' requests to view the college's new facilities have resulted in guided tours. Feedback from internal audits also leads to recommendations for the improvement of provision.

45. The college has developed a range of quality assurance procedures to cover work-based learning. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the quality of some key aspects of training. For example, there is no evaluative observation of induction, learners' progress reviews and the health and safety practices of employers. The college also has no systematic means of checking that new members of staff follow the college's procedures.

46. Following a review of internal verification, the college drew up a standard procedure for internal verification which became operational in September 2001. Some internal verifiers have yet to introduce the new system in their curriculum areas. There has been no qualified internal verifier for the sport and recreation programme since it began in January 2001. Arrangements are being made to provide a qualified internal verifier for this occupational area.

47. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the short self-assessment report, prepared before the reinspection. They found some key weaknesses, however, which the college had not identified. They awarded the same grades as those given in the self-assessment report.