

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
MARCH 2002

# Middlesbrough 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
- ◆ learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- ◆ education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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 Middlesbrough College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in a less than satisfactory grade being awarded for hair and beauty. This area has 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 section of the original report dealing with hair and beauty has 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](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**Middlesbrough College offers training in business administration and hairdressing. In business administration, good training is provided both in the workplace and at college, and regular visits are made by the college staff to learners at work. However, some business administration learners are progressing through their NVQs slowly, and too many learners leave the programme early. The reinspection of hairdressing confirmed the original strengths in relation to the good practical training provided by employers, and the well-planned and competently taught background knowledge sessions in college. At the reinspection, inspectors found that learners were achieving challenging learning targets. The original inspection found that too little assessment evidence was generated at work and that the college's salon did not provide a sufficient number or variety of clients for learners. These weaknesses had all been rectified by the time of the reinspection. Equality of opportunity is well promoted in college, but little monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is done. Learners benefit from a wide range of support services provided by the college. Progress reviews for learners in hairdressing, which were identified as a weakness during the original inspection of trainee support, are now satisfactory. Training programmes are managed satisfactorily. At the reinspection, inspectors found that centralised systems for co-ordinating work-based learning and for the efficient co-ordination of management information in relation to work-based learning are now well established. The college regularly reviews its training programmes and implements improvement plans successfully. However, quality assurance procedures for work-based learning are incomplete.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3
Hair & beauty	4

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good workplace training
- ◆ well-planned and effective off-the-job training
- ◆ well-established working groups to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ wide range of support services for learners
- ◆ effective arrangement for staff development
- ◆ good use made of feedback from learners and employers

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ key skills training and assessment not fully integrated with the NVQ
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ lack of success in securing employed status for learners
- ◆ separate quality assurance procedures for work-based learning not fully established

## INTRODUCTION

1. Middlesbrough College (the college) was established as a tertiary college in 1995, as the result of a merger between a general further education college and a sixth form college. The college is based on two sites. The centre for vocational courses, Kirby Campus, is one mile south of the centre of Middlesbrough, and the Acklam Campus, which is a designated sixth form centre, is one mile further south.

2. At the time of the original inspection, there were 6,302 students, of whom 30 per cent were full time. There are currently 7,885 students, of whom 28 per cent are full time. The college has a contract with Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council to provide work-based learning for young people, and is also contracted by the Employment Service to provide the full-time education and training option of New Deal. At the time of the original inspection, there were 43 learners funded by Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council and 53 New Deal clients at the college. There are currently 38 work-based learners and 33 New Deal clients at the college. At the time of the original inspection, the college employed 221 full-time and 72 part-time staff. It now employs 211 full-time and 80 part-time staff. Learning is organised through five faculties, where work-based learners and New Deal clients are generally taught alongside full-time students. In the case of hairdressing, there are sufficient learners to warrant separate groups for work-based learners. The college's training partnership manager has overall responsibility for work-based learning.

3. At the original inspection, there were 12 learners in business administration, one in hospitality and 30 in hairdressing. There are currently nine learners in business administration, two in hospitality and 27 in hairdressing. Of these 38 learners, eight are advanced modern apprentices and 30 are foundation modern apprentices.

4. At the time of the original inspection, Middlesbrough had a population of 145,000, one of the largest in the Tees Valley conurbation. In 2001, the figure was 143,900 for Middlesbrough. In September 2001, the unemployment rate in Middlesbrough was high at 8.4 per cent, as it had been at the original inspection, compared with a national proportion currently of 3.7 per cent. Of the area's unemployed people, 28.8 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 24. In 2001, only 35 per cent of school leavers in Middlesbrough gained five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above. This is the lowest proportion in the northeast of England. The national average is 47.9 per cent. Figures produced by the Basic Skills Agency show that the proportion of Middlesbrough's population with low literacy and numeracy skills is still 5 per cent higher than the national proportion. Incomes in the area are low and the number of single-parent households is above the national average.

5. The traditional industries of steel, shipbuilding and latterly the chemical industry, have dominated Teesside's economic history. In recent years, the severe decline in these sectors has had a serious impact on the area. Within the Tees Valley area, data from the Office of National Statistics published in 2001 but based on data from 1992 show that 8.1 per cent of the working population is currently employed in manufacturing, 8.1 per cent in construction and 80.5 per cent in service industries. There are skill shortages in communications, information technology (IT) , management, technical and manual skills.

6. Approximately 2 per cent of Teesside's population is from minority ethnic groups, which is lower than the national average of 6 per cent. In Middlesbrough, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 4.4 per cent. Both these proportions remain unchanged from the original inspection.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. The college produced its self-assessment report for inspection in July 2000. Inspections by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the Training Standards Council (TSC) took place during the same week. The college provided inspectors with an update to its action plan to show the progress which had been made by the time of inspection. Self-assessment is an annual process at the college and is linked to the college's business-planning cycle. The self-assessment process was led by the director of quality assurance, who consulted widely with learners, employers and staff. Staff in the two faculties identified the strengths and weaknesses of the occupational areas, and gave a self-assessment grade for these areas, while a cross-college team of staff evaluated the generic aspects. The self-assessment report was approved by a validation panel, which included representatives from learners, external stakeholders and staff. Inspectors awarded lower grades than those given in the self-assessment report for all areas except trainee support, with which they agreed. The college produced a post-inspection action plan to deal with weaknesses in hairdressing. This was regularly updated and proved to be a useful basis for the reinspection. The most recent self-assessment report was produced in October 2001.

8. In November 2000, a team of three TSC inspectors spent a total of 12 days at the college. Where appropriate, FEFC and TSC inspectors shared evidence, including results of lesson observations. Hospitality was not inspected as there was only one learner in this sector. New Deal provision was also excluded from the inspection, as this work had previously been inspected as part of an Employment Service unit of delivery. TSC inspectors interviewed 17 learners and examined 35 learners' files. They interviewed 30 staff and 10 employers. Sixteen portfolios of NVQ assessment evidence were examined. A wide range of documentary evidence was also scrutinised, including minutes of meetings, policies, quality assurance documents, action plans and management information. Four training sessions were observed.

9. In March 2002, a team of two inspectors spent a total of six days at Middlesbrough College. They interviewed 25 learners and examined eight learners' files. They interviewed 16 staff and six employers. Inspectors examined seven portfolios of NVQ and key skills assessment evidence and looked at a wide range of documents including minutes of meetings, policies, quality assurance documents, action plans and management information. Four training sessions were observed and graded using the seven point scale. Two were judged to be good and two were satisfactory.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration			1			1
Hair & beauty			3			3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 3

10. There are 12 trainees on the college's business administration programme. Five are modern apprentices and seven are on the national traineeship programme. All are working towards NVQs in administration at levels 2 or 3. All national trainees are of non-employed status, but attend work placements four days a week. Trainees work in a range of establishments, including the college itself, two local police offices, a private training provider and a commercial garage. Tutors visit trainees at least once every six weeks in the workplace to carry out monitoring, assessments and reviews. All trainees attend the college one day each week for theory work, key skills, keyboard skills and portfolio-building. Recruitment to the national traineeship programme (formerly youth training until April 1999) has remained constant over the last three years, with seven new starters in each year, and three new recruits in the current year. Recruitment to the modern apprenticeship programme, however, has been erratic, with no new entrants during 1998-99. Over the last three years, there have been 10 recruits to the modern apprenticeship programme. Five of these are still in training, two left early without a qualification and three left having achieved NVQs at level 3. Over the same period, 17 people have left the national traineeship programme. Nine of these trainees left early without a qualification and eight completed their individual training programmes. Inspectors agreed with the strength outlined in the self-assessment report relating to good off-the-job training and found additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that proposed by the college's self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good workplace training
- ◆ well-planned programme of off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent assessment and progress reviews for national trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some slow trainee progress
- ◆ key skills training and assessment not fully integrated with the NVQ
- ◆ poor retention rate on national traineeship programme



11. Training in the workplace is good and clearly structured. On-the-job training plans are provided, which specify learning that will be undertaken at work. Employers not only set aside time during working hours for trainees to work on their evidence portfolios, they are also fully aware of the content of the NVQ programme and provide a high level of guidance and support for trainees. Tasks are set to enable trainees to cover the whole of the NVQ and to generate assessment evidence. Workplace supervisors willingly supply witness testimonies, so trainees can use tasks they have done at work for assessment purposes. There is regular and frequent communication between workplace supervisors and college tutors, who are also the NVQ assessors. To enhance the on-the-job training arrangements, the college has produced a form, on which employers give details of the training they will provide against each unit of the award. Where gaps are identified, tutors ensure that appropriate experience will be provided off the job at the college. In addition to NVQ training, trainees benefit from the staff training provided by employers on topics such as manual handling, effective communication, team-building and disability awareness.

12. The college provides a well-structured and clearly planned programme of off-the-job training. Trainees and workplace supervisors are given copies of the scheme of work, showing which topics will be covered on each day of attendance. These copies provide details of resources to be used, course-work expectations of trainees and links with key skills.

13. Trainees are visited in the workplace frequently by their assessor. These visits are scheduled for every six weeks. During visits, assessors carry out progress reviews and observations for assessment purposes. The reviews fully involve the workplace supervisor concerned. Assessment plans are used effectively and clearly specify elements of competence to be assessed, assessment methods and target dates. Following assessment, trainees are given comprehensive written and verbal feedback.

14. Generally, each group of trainees progresses through the NVQ being worked towards at the same pace as the other groups, with most taking a full two years to complete a national traineeship and three years to finish a modern apprenticeship. For some trainees, however, this pace is not sufficiently challenging as they are capable of progressing far more quickly. On the whole, trainees are not set very demanding targets. Where targets are not met, they are routinely extended, often for one or two months, when the task set could reasonably be completed much more rapidly.

15. The college has worked hard to improve the way in which it approaches key skills. Last year, trainees attended day-release sessions in college over a four-week period. During these sessions, they concentrated on generating assessment evidence for key skills. In the current year, trainees attend key skills sessions at college throughout their programme and are also advised of evidence to be collected from the workplace. However, key skills are not yet fully integrated into the NVQ programme, as evidence is still collected separately and kept in a

separate file from the NVQ evidence. Furthermore, NVQ assessment observations do not include key skills elements.

16. Retention rates on the national traineeship programme are poor. The trainee achievement figures for national apprentices for the last three years include two years in which trainees were on the youth training programme. Retention rate figures over the last three years show that 53 per cent of trainees left early without a qualification, while the remaining 47 per cent completed their individual training plans. However, of the 14 youth trainee leavers between 1997 and 1999, 10 progressed into employment.

## **Hair & beauty**

## **Grade 2**

17. Middlesbrough College offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship hairdressing programmes. There are currently 31 learners. Twenty-one are on foundation modern apprenticeships, six are advanced modern apprentices and four are New Deal clients. The foundation modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2 and the advanced modern apprentices towards NVQs at level 3. All learners work towards key skills at a level appropriate to their framework, unless they are exempt through previously acquired qualifications. All advanced, and 15 foundation, modern apprentices are employed. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme should take one year and the advanced should take 18 months. The college presently has learners in 25 local salons. Learners apply to the college and staff help them to find a suitable work placement. Some learners are recruited directly by employers and are then sent to the college for their off-the-job training. Learners complete an induction checklist, which highlights what they covered at induction either at the training centre or at work. Their literacy and numeracy needs are assessed. The results determine which training programme is most suitable for them. All learners, including the New Deal clients, attend the college one day a week for background knowledge and practical training and assessment. They spend the other four days working in the salon. The college appointed an assessor in March 2001 to visit salons and carry out work-based assessment. The work-based assessor conducts quarterly health and safety checks at salons. Learners are reviewed every 12 weeks at the college and employers add their comments. All staff involved in the training and assessment of learners have teaching qualifications and the relevant assessors' awards. Two internal verifiers carry out sampling of assessment practice in the college and in the workplace.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little work-based evidence used for assessments
- ◆ too few hairdressing clients in the college's salon
- ◆ failure to set trainees challenging targets
- ◆ key skills not fully integrated with the NVQ

- ◆ poor NVQ achievement rates

18. The college has made significant progress in remedying the weaknesses that were identified at the original inspection. A work-based assessor was recruited specifically for the salons. The college has spent time ensuring that learners have a good understanding of their NVQ and are able to manage their progress, plan assessments and use witness testimonies. There has been a successful initiative to attract more hairdressing clients to the college's salons. However, there are still too few clients at the college salons. Learners do not have enough opportunities to work, and be assessed on, actual clients rather than head blocks. Target-setting and achievement is now part of learners' programmes. Key skills assignments now relate directly to hairdressing. Since the original inspection, there has been insufficient time to judge the progress that learners have made towards completing the framework. However, the accumulation of NVQ units is a clear indication of the improvements made. The strengths identified in the original inspection remained key features of the provision. The latest self-assessment report from October 2001 did not sufficiently identify key strengths existing at the time of the reinspection.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ achievement of challenging targets by learners
- ◆ particularly effective hairdressing training
- ◆ productive relationships with employers
- ◆ effective support for learners

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

19. Considerable attention is given to setting learners challenging but attainable targets. Learners are making good progress and tutors are encouraging them to complete NVQ units. Most learners complete units in shampooing, reception, teamwork and health and safety early in their training programme. The college has developed a system which identifies whether it is better to assess learners at work or at the training salon, and learners use this to plan their assessments. A £50 bonus is offered to learners who complete units ahead of the target date. Learners are well motivated and achieve the challenging targets they are set. Tutors mark assignments and give learners comprehensive feedback which helps progress. The work-based assessor visits the salons at least once every four weeks. Learners also use witness testimonies to generate work-based evidence. Learners have a good understanding of the requirements of their training programmes and are clear about how they can progress. There are too few work-based assessors, and assessors' visits are not always well timed, so learners cannot always collect evidence of their competences through their everyday work. Sometimes learners have to bring in their own models, which can be difficult to arrange. Some learners are assessed working on their peers. The college has recognised the need for more work-based assessors and is promoting assessors' awards to the salons, with a cash incentive

for early achievement of the qualification.

20. Each learner has a termly progress review during tutorials at college. Tutors gather and record information regarding learners' progress at college. The work-based assessor takes the progress review document to the employer and they discuss it with the learner. There is insufficient emphasis on work-based learning activities in the progress review.

21. Training in the college is planned, and carried out well. Background knowledge sessions are competently taught by qualified and experienced staff. There are detailed schemes of work and effective lesson plans. At the start of their training programme, learners are encouraged to say how they prefer to learn. Tutors then organise sessions using various teaching techniques to try to fulfil all learners' needs. Learning packages are used to develop background knowledge. The attainment of level 3 learners is good. They are encouraged to work independently and develop their creative skills. Many of the salons have structured training sessions where the learners can bring in models and practise their skills. In most salons, learners quickly learn a wide range of salon skills and become productive members of the team.

22. There are effective links with employers, who are kept well informed about learners' progress. Work-based assessment visits by college staff have been effective in building links with the salons. Employers are invited to meetings at the college and those that attend find them informative and relevant. The college has invited employers and learners to hairdressing events covering techniques in colour and cutting.

23. There is effective support for individual learners. Two of the background knowledge sessions at the college for foundation modern apprentices are taught by two staff. One helps learners with their written work while the other leads the session. Two members of staff have completed a learning support certificate. Staff have added an extra hour to the timetable in order to see learners individually. Staff involved with key skills and the vocational tutors have worked closely together to identify where opportunities to gather key skills evidence lie within the NVQ. Where there are gaps, assignments have been developed that are relevant to hairdressing. Learners find these valuable.

24. The foundation modern apprentices have key skills IT sessions in a poorly equipped room. Equipment is out of date and slow, and learners have to produce written work instead of using the computers. This is having a significant effect on the learning in these sessions.

25. College promotional materials are generally good, but course information leaflets are unclear and difficult to read. They do not give clear information to prospective learners about the content of a modern apprenticeship programme.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

26. The college has an equal opportunities policy, which refers to current legislation on sex discrimination, race relations, equal pay and disability discrimination. It is signed by the chief executive. The college also has a racial harassment policy, a policy for tutorial support, a disability statement, an inclusive learning policy and a complaints procedure. Policies and procedures are contained in the staff handbook and on the college's intranet. A statement on equal opportunities is contained in the student charter which is given to all trainees during their induction programme. The director of human resources has overall responsibility for equal opportunities and the equal opportunities committee is chaired by the co-ordinator. The committee monitors and reviews progress towards the college action plan to further equality of opportunity. This action plan is produced annually. Staff and trainees receive training on equal opportunities through staff development, induction programmes and tutorial sessions. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and one of the weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report. They identified an additional weakness relating to lack of monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace, and awarded a lower grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-established working groups to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ well-implemented policies and procedures

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ under-representation of some groups in training
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace

27. The college places a high emphasis on equality of opportunities, having a designated committee and access group to ensure the progress of its equal opportunities agenda. The equal opportunities committee examines working practices across the college and identifies ways in which it can improve equality. It is instrumental in drawing up action plans for improvements and monitoring progress towards achievement of plans. The college has created links with external organisations to widen participation and encourage those from under-represented groups to participate in training. These external agencies include the Commission for Racial Equality, the Racial Harassment Forum, the Equal Opportunities Commission and local disability groups. It has an inclusive learning strategy which has led to improvements in the college's initial assessment procedures. The procedure now includes assessment of trainees' preferred learning styles, which are then taken into account when planning training. The college has introduced unit accreditation to acknowledge the achievements of trainees who are unable to obtain a full qualification. There is an extensive staff training programme on equal opportunities issues such as inclusive learning, disability awareness and learning

preferences. The college's policy on equal opportunities is produced in a simplified format in the student charter to ensure that it is comprehensible to all. Non-discriminatory behaviour is promoted and reinforced during training.

28. Trainees and staff have a good awareness of the college's procedures for monitoring equality of opportunity. These procedures include staff and trainee recruitment policies, harassment policies and procedures covering review of promotional literature. Trainees have a good understanding of the college's complaints procedure, both for logging formal complaints through senior management and through the grievance procedure in occupational areas. Trainee complaints are treated seriously, resolved efficiently and dealt with confidentially. The director of corporate services manages the complaints procedure, which requires complaints to be acknowledged within three working days of being received and dealt with within 10 working days. Managers maintain and review records of complaints received and monitor the nature of the complaints to identify any trends or recurring themes.

29. Within the hairdressing and business administration areas, there is a marked under-representation of men, with only one man in each occupational area: only two, out of a total of 43 trainees. Despite the links created with local community groups and attempts to widen participation, the college's efforts have not resulted in success in recruiting more men into training.

30. The college provides a range of material to employers when agreeing placements and apprenticeships with employers. There is an employers' handbook which outlines their responsibilities, including adherence to the college's equal opportunities policy. As part of the initial vetting procedure for work placements, checks are carried out on equality of opportunity in the workplace. However, following this initial check, no regular monitoring takes place. For example, the college's trainee review process fails to take the opportunity to review equal opportunities.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

31. Trainees are referred to the college and recruited through direct links with employers. They initially complete an application form and are then contacted by the programme co-ordinator and invited for interview. Successful applicants attend an induction programme which lasts between one and two weeks. During this time, trainees are found a suitable work placement. They also undergo an initial assessment process, which includes basic skills and key skills assessment. The TEC contract requires the college to carry out reviews of trainees' progress every 12 weeks. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that its student support services are a key strength of trainee support. However, they did not agree with the other strengths and weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the self-assessment

grade given in the report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ very good careers guidance
- ◆ thorough induction programme
- ◆ wide range of support services for trainees

#### GOOD PRACTICE

All trainees are issued with an identity card. This was introduced as a safety initiative. All trainees must display their personal identity cards to a security guard on entry to the College. Failure to display identity is noted and action is taken if this is repeated.

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor progress reviews in hairdressing

32. The college maintains strong links with over 50 local schools. The college has a dedicated liaison officer who visits the schools regularly to discuss careers options with students. Potential trainees are well informed of the opportunities available to them. Promotional literature makes specific reference to work-based training programmes. There are also good links with the local careers service whose staff visit the college twice a week to hold careers clinics with trainees. Trainees can make appointments for this when necessary. The college's student services team maintains a high profile in all local careers events. The team has contacts with local youth clubs and close relationships with the youth service. The college has a purpose-built careers office situated in its entrance foyer which is permanently staffed by well-qualified careers guidance personnel. This high profile service is accessible to all trainees to ensure that they have full information on the range of training programmes available.

33. Trainees all undertake a comprehensive induction programme at the beginning of their studies, which lasts between one and two weeks. During induction, they are given information on the college as a whole, including the wide range of support services available to them. Trainees are also provided with copies of the college's key policies and the student charter. They undertake a further in-depth induction in their relevant faculty, which provides detailed information on their chosen programme, including an overview of the NVQ and key skill units. Trainees also attend interviews for work placements during this time, and a suitable placement is found for them. Strong emphasis is placed on health and safety issues during trainee induction, and trainees' knowledge of health and safety is checked through the use of a questionnaire. Initial assessment is thorough, and includes assessment of trainees' basic and key skills. It also provides opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning. Furthermore, where trainees are identified as needing additional learning support, contact is made with the learning support co-ordinator to make the necessary arrangements.

34. The college has a wide range of support services available to all students. Many of the work-based trainees take advantage of these excellent services. For example, the student support services team offers a counselling and guidance service, run by qualified and experienced staff. This service is widely publicised throughout the college on posters and notices. The college also has good links with a range of agencies to whom it may refer trainees for more specialist counselling

on issues such as drug dependence, child protection and health-related topics. A good range of practical support is available to trainees, including subsidised meals, a library, a learning resource centre which is well equipped with computers, and a newly renovated gym. Trainees can call in at the college at any time during the week to use these facilities. The college also provides buses to transport trainees from outlying areas.

35. The college provides additional learning support for all students. Several of the work-based trainees benefit from this service. Arrangements for these trainees to attend college for any additional training are made around their core timetable. Additional learning support includes literacy and numeracy training, which enables these trainees to meet the requirements of their NVQ programme and key skills units. Learning activities are also linked with the vocational programme. In many cases, trainees take their NVQ assignment and portfolio work to the learning support sessions so that they can work on them while they are there. Trainees greatly value the additional help given.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

36. Co-ordination of MC's TEC-funded and New Deal training is carried out by the training partnerships manager, who is directly responsible to the director of curriculum (one of five cross-college directors). There are five learning faculties, each of which has a faculty head assisted by curriculum managers. The principal, vice principal, assistant principal, five directors and five heads of faculty comprise the management team, which holds weekly formal meetings. Each faculty has a designated contact person for work-based training. There are TEC funded trainees in two of the faculties, which relate to the business and service industries. Staff within these faculties carry out off-the-job training, assessment and reviews. In business administration, tutors visit trainees in their workplace to carry out placement monitoring, assessment and reviews. In hairdressing, there is a separate placement monitoring officer. Assessment and reviews for trainees in hairdressing are carried out by tutors on the college premises. The college achieved the Investors in People standard in August 1998, was successfully re-accredited in 1999 and has a further re-assessment planned for late November 2000. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and two of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified two other strengths and an additional weakness relating to lack of success in securing employment status for trainees, and awarded a lower grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good internal and external communication
- ◆ good implementation of the college's policies
- ◆ effective arrangements for staff development
- ◆ well-established network of work-placement providers



### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak central co-ordination of work-based training
- ◆ lack of success in securing employed status for trainees
- ◆ inefficient co-ordination of management information

37. Good communication exists between staff, trainees and employers. The college has a range of internal mechanisms to enable such effective communication. These include regular staff briefings, a comprehensive schedule of meetings and a weekly staff bulletin. In addition, each faculty produces regular newsletters which are distributed to all trainees. There is an electronic mail system and a college intranet. Meetings are clearly recorded along with action points and dates for completion, and minutes are circulated to all concerned. Trainee and employer handbooks are available, which contain essential information on all training programmes. These are regularly updated and distributed to all concerned. In addition to visits to employers, staff maintain and record regular telephone contact with the placement providers. Employers have a named person to whom they direct any communication or queries. This good range of measures ensures that staff, trainees and employers are well informed and have constant access to detailed information relating directly to the training programmes and broader college issues. Employers are given copies of the schemes of work to be covered in college, and records of trainees' attendance at college and work are well maintained.

38. The college has clearly documented policies which cover a range of cross-college issues, including those which impact directly on trainees. Many of these policies are included in the staff handbook, which is available on the intranet. They cover a wide range of topics, including a teaching code of practice and policies on internal verification, programme validation and review, staff appointments, trainee welfare, and health and safety. All the policies are fully supported by staff, well implemented and regularly reviewed by the management team.

39. Arrangements for staff development at the college are good and effective. There are annual staff appraisals, from which individual development plans are generated. The college also has a training plan which is linked to the strategic plan. Both are used to identify staff development needs. Staff undertake a range of development activities, including internal and external training courses. Some of these courses lead to qualifications, while others are not accredited. Staff are well qualified, and hold a variety of vocational, teaching and NVQ assessor awards. Some are also qualified to carry out internal verification and are able to advise trainees on accreditation of prior learning. In hairdressing, staff update their professional knowledge through attending regular seminars and training events provided by product manufacturers. In business administration, professional updating is achieved during tutors' regular visits to the workplace. Staff also have annual lesson observations and are given written feedback on their performance as well as suggestions for improvement. Lessons are graded and, where the quality of the session is considered to be less than satisfactory, a further observation takes

place. The observation system is a useful staff development tool and enables college managers to monitor the quality of instruction. Observations have recently been carried out on the staff who teach the work-based training programmes.

40. Most employers and work placement providers have long-standing relationships with the college. They are highly satisfied with the current arrangements and are supportive of and loyal to the college. Indeed, many employers state that they would not consider being involved in work-based training through any other training provider. Staff at the college work hard to maintain the college's excellent reputation with employers and to provide an efficient, responsive service.

41. Work-based training is not very well co-ordinated centrally at the college. In recognition of this need, the college created the post of training partnerships manager in October 1999. The post holder left the college in May 2000 and a replacement staff member took up the post in June 2000. While much development work has recently been undertaken and substantial progress has been made, central co-ordination is not yet fully established. Work-based trainees are taught alongside other academic trainees within the different faculties. Each faculty uses different systems and paperwork, which complicates the monitoring of work-based training at the college. Until recently, there has been little central monitoring of crucial aspects of the work-based training programme, such as trainees' progress, reviews, work placement visits or health and safety checks. Records of these activities have been maintained within each of the faculties, but not centrally. Work is currently being done to create a central recording and monitoring system for the work-based training at the college.

42. The college has a long history of providing non-employed status training programmes, including youth training and other training. In April 1999, the TEC ceased to contract with the college for other training programmes and required it to convert all those in such training to a national traineeship programme. Of the 43 trainees on TEC-funded programmes, 38 are national trainees. The national trainee frameworks strongly recommend that trainees be employed from the beginning of the programme. In its contract, however, the TEC states that employment is not a mandatory requirement. None of the national trainees at the college are employed. Action has been taken by the college to try to encourage work-placement providers to employ trainees, but this has so far been unsuccessful. However, most placement providers employ trainees at the end of their training programme.

43. The college highlighted in its self-assessment report that the current management information system for TEC-funded trainees is inefficient and unco-ordinated. All trainees who attend college are entered on the main college system which generates attendance registers. A list of current trainees is also produced by a separate system maintained by the training partnerships manager. Often there are discrepancies between the two systems, which are time-consuming to resolve. Records of the destination of training programme leavers are maintained by the faculty clerks. One of the clerks operates a manual system and the other has

devised a computerised system to record details. While the information recorded is accurate and available, it is not centralised.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

44. A director of quality, responsible for quality assurance throughout the college, was appointed in October 1999. The college staff handbook, which is available on the intranet, contains many of the quality procedures. The quality assurance policy covers all aspects of the college's work. Programme review meetings are held every term, and these are attended by staff, trainees, representatives of the careers service, work-placement providers and employers. Questionnaires are also used to gather the views of trainees and employers. Findings from these questionnaires are collated and reported to the quality sub-committee of the academic board. The college has a panel which validates its self-assessment report. This panel includes a range of staff, a governor and a TEC representative. Inspectors did not agree with the six strengths given in the self-assessment report, although they identified three different strengths. Inspectors broadly agreed with the two weaknesses highlighted through self-assessment and awarded a grade lower than that proposed by the college's self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive and consultative self-assessment process
- ◆ effective implementation of improvement plans
- ◆ good use made of trainee and employer feedback

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of established quality assurance procedures for work-based training
- ◆ little analysis of information relating to trainee retention and achievement

45. The college has demonstrated its strong commitment to quality assurance through the appointment of a director whose sole remit relates to this area. The college has carried out annual self-assessment to meet FEFC requirements since 1996. In 1999, it carried out self-assessment of its work-based training against a set of regional quality standards which were based upon *Raising the Standard*, as required by the TEC. In preparation for inspection, the college produced a separate self-assessment report for its TEC-funded work in addition to that produced for the FEFC. Self-assessment is an integral part of the college's quality assurance system. All relevant staff were involved in self-assessment and all proposed strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report is clear, detailed and well structured. Evidence is cited to support the judgements made. At inspection, evidence was well organised, clearly referenced and accessible. Despite this, many of the strengths in the self-assessment report were identified by inspectors as normal practice, and the college was not deemed to have taken sufficient account

of trainee retention and achievements when forming its judgements.

46. The college has a well-established system of implementing improvement plans. Plans are drawn up for individuals, programmes and faculties. They are carefully monitored and successfully implemented. The director of quality centrally monitors reports from external audits and awarding body visits. Feedback from external verifiers is clearly communicated to staff and, where appropriate, remedial action is swiftly identified and taken. The college's system of lesson observations is well established and in its fourth year of operation. A paper on good practice identified through the lesson observations is circulated once a term. There are also regular good-practice forums, which help to address specific issues as they arise. Recent forums have covered assessment and lessons.

47. The views of trainees are sought through the issue of questionnaires three times a year. Responses are collated and analysed, and findings are reported to curriculum teams. Suggestions for improvements are discussed and, where appropriate, changes to the training programmes are made. Questionnaires are also sent to employers, although the response rate for these is poor. Only 11 responses were received from 42 perception questionnaires issued to employers as part of the self-assessment process. Employers are also invited to the termly programme review meetings, which are fully attended by staff and trainees. Some work-placement providers attend these meetings and contribute feedback and ideas. Trainees are also represented on key committees such as the academic board, the information technology advisory group and the learning resource centre user group.

48. Quality procedures for work-based training are not fully developed yet. The college has recognised that some separate procedures for work-based training are required. The training partnership manager is in the process of developing these procedures. Although some have already been developed and were introduced in September 2000, others have yet to be implemented. Recently, checks have been made of trainee and work-placement files, and as a result of these some administrative errors and omissions were found. Requests for corrective action have been issued regarding this. As yet, there is no audit schedule outlining arrangements for systematically checking that quality procedures are being followed. Nevertheless, the college has an internal verification policy, which operates well in both faculties. Internal verification is well planned and clearly recorded.

49. Until recently, there has been little analysis of data relating to trainees' retention and achievement and the destination of leavers in order to inform improvements. While retention and achievement rates are available for FEFC-funded courses, separate figures are not routinely generated for work-based training. The figures produced for FEFC courses relate to the academic year from September to July, whereas the TEC contract year begins in April. These data are therefore of little use in measuring the success of the work-based training programmes. In preparation for inspection, however, the college produced data on

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trainees' retention and achievements for each of the two sectors and training programmes, which was more detailed than any data previously used. Also, new procedures for recording leaver destinations have recently been introduced.