

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION
REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
FEBRUARY 2002

Walsall College of Arts and Technology



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 Walsall College of Arts and Technology was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for hair and beauty, equal opportunities 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 hair and beauty, equal opportunities 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).

Walsall College of Arts and Technology offers work-based learning for young people in a number of areas, including construction, engineering and hairdressing. There are good training facilities in all occupational areas, some of which are provided through excellent links with industry. In construction, the rates of achievement for learners in painting and decorating are good, although in wood occupations, key skills training is not an integral part of the vocational training programme. In engineering, employers provide good training and learners collect good work-based evidence, but few have completed all the targets in their modern apprenticeship frameworks. At the time of the original inspection, training in hairdressing was less than satisfactory. The training is now good. Rates of achievement are now good, and learners receive comprehensive training. Progress reviews are not sufficiently detailed. The college now promotes equality of opportunity well, but its many initiatives to widen the participation of under-represented groups in work-based learning has not been effective. Learners receive a good induction and have access to a wide range of support services. Individual learning plans are not used effectively. The management of training lacks co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training, but there is good staff recruitment and development. Quality assurance is now comprehensive and effective. However, there is insufficient focus on the work-based learning provision in the self-assessment process.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Hair & beauty	4

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good rates of achievement of most modern apprenticeships
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training programmes
- ◆ good off-the-job training facilities and resources
- ◆ effective links with schools, careers service and industry
- ◆ wide range of good support services in college
- ◆ thorough staff recruitment and development procedures
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ comprehensive and effective quality assurance system

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement rates of modern apprenticeships in engineering
- ◆ poor practice in learners' progress reviews
- ◆ insufficient recruitment of under-represented groups
- ◆ insufficient focus on work-based learning in the self-assessment process

INTRODUCTION

1. Walsall College of Arts and Technology is a general further education college serving the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall and the surrounding area. The college was formed in 1992, following a merger between the Walsall College of Technology and the Walsall College of Art. The college operates from four main sites close to Walsall town centre. Most learners attend the main site at St Paul's campus, although painting and decorating training is carried out at the Bradford Place annexe. The college plays an active part in the local community and supports the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) projects, a national health project, and is a founding member of the local area's business partnership. The college is also a partner in the local alliance promoting lifelong learning. There are currently 28 staff involved directly in the training and support of work-based learning for young people, one more than at the time of the original inspection.

2. At the time of the original inspection, Walsall College of Arts and Technology contracted with the Walsall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based learning for young people. It subcontracted New Deal Gateway and New Deal options from the Black Country Unit of Delivery. The college offers work-based learning in the occupational areas of construction, engineering, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, hairdressing, health care, and foundation for work. Learners are following national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and 3, or units towards these. At the original inspection, there were 33 advanced modern apprentices, 51 foundation modern apprentices, 12 learners on other work-based learning programmes for young people, four learners on the Gateway and 93 New Deal learners on options. There were too few learners in the Gateway to be included as part of the inspection. New Deal learners were also not included in the inspection as the Black Country Unit of Delivery was inspected in July 2000. At the time of reinspection, the Black Country Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the training for 43 advanced modern apprentices, 105 foundation modern apprentices and 15 learners on Life Skills foundation programmes. The Employment Service funds 41 New Deal learners aged 18-25. The Black Country Unit of Delivery was reinspected in January 2002.

3. The 1991 census shows that 9.6 per cent of the population in Walsall are from minority ethnic groups. This compares with the national rate of 6.2 per cent. There are few large private-sector employers and most businesses are small. One of the main areas for employment, despite recent declines, is manufacturing, which employs 35.6 per cent of the population. The unemployment rate for the area in September 2000 was 4.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.4 per cent. In September 2001, these proportions were 4.5 per cent and 2.9 per cent, respectively.

4. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Walsall achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 37

per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. In 2001, these proportions were 40.6 per cent and 47.9 per cent, respectively.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The college produced its third self-assessment report in July 2000, in preparation for the original inspection. The report was co-ordinated by the management team and was written in accordance with the guidelines in *Raising the Standard*. The report was cross-referenced to the college's Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) self-assessment report. The college produced its sixth self-assessment report in February 2002, in preparation for the reinspection. This report was written in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework*. Since the original inspection, the college has changed from producing separate work-based learning and college self-assessment reports, to one report that covers all the college's training and educational provision. Staff, learners and employers were consulted and contributed to the self-assessment process. The new self-assessment report does not focus sufficiently on work-based learning provision. Inspectors found some additional strengths and weaknesses. The college has produced a number of action plans during the self-assessment process to remedy the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those given in the self-assessment report for two of the reinspected areas, and awarded one grade lower for the other reinspected area.

6. The original inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors, who spent a total of 26 days at Walsall College of Arts and Technology between the end of October and the beginning of November 2000. The inspectors interviewed 48 learners, either at the college or in the workplace. The inspectors visited 22 employers and interviewed 19 workplace managers or supervisors. A total of 62 interviews were conducted with staff from the college. Inspectors examined learners' files and work, including portfolios of evidence and assessment records. Other paperwork examined included the TEC contract, quality assurance and procedures manuals, lesson plans, minutes of meetings, and internal and external verifiers' reports. Inspectors observed 12 training sessions, four key skills sessions, one assessment and one tutorial.

7. The reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of eight days at the college in February 2002. Inspectors conducted 27 interviews with learners, employers, college managers and assessors, and observed two learning sessions. Inspectors examined a range of paperwork, including individual learning plans, portfolios of evidence, progress reviews, action plans, and personal files and records. They also examined college documents, plans, policies and procedures, promotional materials, internal and external verifiers' reports, and the college's self-assessment report.

Grades awarded to instruction at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		4	3	2		9
Engineering		1	3			4
Hair & beauty		1	3	1		5
Total	0	6	9	3	0	18

Grades awarded to instruction at the reinspection

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

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

8. There are 47 trainees on construction training programmes. There are 23 trainees on the painting and decorating programmes, of whom six are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are advanced modern apprentices. There are 19 trainees on the wood occupations programmes, of whom 11 are foundation modern apprentices and eight are advanced modern apprentices. In plumbing there are four trainees, all of whom are foundation modern apprentices. There is one foundation modern apprentice on the brickwork programme. All trainees are employed and attend college for off-the-job training on one day each week. All trainees are working towards the achievement of NVQs at levels 2 or 3, depending on the training framework they are following. Wood occupations, plumbing and brickwork training are given at the main college campus. Painting and decorating training is given at the college's Bradford Place annexe. Most construction trainees are assessed at the college. A work-placement officer has been appointed by the college for the purpose of reviewing trainees' progress in the workplace and to offer support and guidance to the trainees and employers. The trainees work for a wide variety of employers, both small and large, which provide trainees with the opportunity to develop their skills and establish competence in their occupational area. Between March 1999 and April 2000, 55 trainees started on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme and eight trainees are still in training. Of the 47 who have left, 26 were painting and decorating trainees who have completed their programme frameworks and 21 left early. Eleven of the early leavers achieved NVQs at level 2, while the other 10 achieved no qualifications. The modern apprentices all started this year. Some of the strengths in the self-assessment report were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The inspectors agreed with the weakness of insufficient monitoring of trainees and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured and effective training sessions
- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ good integration of key skills in painting and decorating

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective assessment planning
- ◆ poor involvement of employers in some areas
- ◆ missed opportunities to gather work-based evidence
- ◆ poor completion of carpentry foundation modern apprenticeship framework

9. Training sessions are well structured and effective. Lesson plans include clear aims and objectives as well as methods of training and resources to be used. Training methods used are sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual trainees. Trainees are actively encouraged to participate throughout the sessions. This is done through the use of brainstorming exercises, involvement in practical demonstrations, group activities and discussions. Trainees' understanding is checked at regular intervals throughout the sessions with the aid of questioning, case studies and the completion of simple task sheets. Most training is well paced with a variety of techniques used by the trainers. The learning experience is enhanced with the use of a wide variety of training aids, including slide projectors, flipcharts, white boards, visual aids and material samples. In some sessions, trainees are required to use camcorders and camera equipment in order to produce images and record data. Computers are also used in some instances. Clear, informative handouts are distributed to trainees, where appropriate.

GOOD PRACTICE

The painting and decorating staff have produced special computer-based training materials for the NVQ unit on spraying. The material is very informative and easy to use. This has been used for a number of training sessions. It has proved to be effective and is well received by trainees.

10. Most of the workshops and classrooms are spacious and provide a good learning environment. The painting and decorating workshops are well laid out and very well maintained. One section within the painting and decorating department has been registered by a leading paint manufacturer as one of its professional-skills learning centres. This was opened in 1999 by the company's national specifications manager and the principal of the college. The same paint manufacturer visits the college at intervals to give presentations to trainees on the manufacturing and availability of its products and to demonstrate various application methods. These presentations are relevant to the NVQ and enhance the training being undertaken. Most trainees are well motivated and there are good working relationships between staff and trainees throughout the construction area.

11. Key skills are integrated well into the painting and decorating training programmes. Evidence from trainees' NVQ portfolios are carefully cross-referenced to various elements of the key skills standards. Additional evidence produced for key skills is in the context of the qualification being followed. There is good support from the college's key skills department for the processes of training and assessment. Trainees have access to a well-resourced information technology suite, which is contained within the painting and decorating department. This is used effectively by all of the trainees. All completed key skills

portfolios are of a high standard.

12. Assessment planning is ineffective across most of the construction occupations. Many trainees are not given the opportunity to discuss and agree methods and timing of assessments individually with their assessors before they are assessed. In many cases, the trainees sign their assessment plans after they have been assessed. There are occasions when trainees are unsure as to whether they are being assessed or undergoing training. Some trainees are not aware of the actual NVQ units they are being assessed on. There is a poor understanding among trainees of the NVQ appeals procedure should they disagree with an assessment decision. Although trainees are issued with the standards for a particular assessment being undertaken, they are not aware of the performance criteria required to achieve these standards. The tracking system to ensure cover of internal verification across NVQ units and trainees, however, is good.

13. There is little involvement by employers in the training and assessment of their trainees. Employers have very little influence or involvement in the planning and structuring of the training programmes. There is a lack of awareness among employers of the content of NVQs and the way in which the NVQ process operates. Training within the workplace is not structured to the NVQ and the college has little influence over on-the-job training. Although the college has suggested to employers that some staff may wish to become work-based assessors, training has yet to be undertaken by any of the employers' staff. Advisory committees have been set up within the college, and employers are invited to participate as active members. However, attendance by construction employers is poor.

14. There are many missed opportunities to gather work-based evidence. Very little assessment is carried out in the workplace. When trainees are observed in the workplace, this only happens on a single occasion and competence is not observed over a period of time. Most trainees are not actively encouraged to gather evidence from the workplace to present to their assessors. These missed opportunities to gather evidence have resulted in trainees having to repeat work in college which they perform regularly in the workplace. The college has recently appointed two construction assessors to assess trainees in the workplace. These assessors are not yet visiting workplaces regularly. Suitable recording procedures for workplace assessments and gathering evidence are still being developed.

15. No trainees have completed the foundation modern apprenticeship framework in wood occupations. There are eight trainees who have completed their NVQs at level 2 and have transferred to the advanced modern apprenticeship programme but they have not yet achieved any of the required key skills.

Engineering

Grade 3

16. There are 32 engineering trainees on a range of engineering NVQs at levels 2

and 3. There are seven advanced modern apprentices and 13 foundation modern apprentices. The advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 3 in technical services, manufacture, maintenance or engineering production. There are 12 trainees on work-based training programmes for young people. All trainees are employed in a diverse range of engineering manufacturing industries, with the exception of one who is employed in the motor-vehicle trade. All off-the-job training is given in workshops and classrooms at the St Paul's campus. The theory training for all engineering programmes is taught using the frameworks for the national or higher national certificates in engineering. Foundation modern apprentices follow a programme leading to NVQs at level 2 supported by an awarding body's craft programmes in engineering production. Trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people also follow this awarding body's craft programmes. There is one motor-vehicle trainee working towards an NVQ at level 2 in vehicle mechanical and electronic systems (unit replacement). The first four weeks of a trainee's programme are undertaken as a block-release course in the college's workshops. After this, trainees attend the college for one or two days a week. One of these two days is used for the practical training, and the other for associated theory training. Trainees who cannot attend the second day use the course information packs and study guides to develop their theoretical knowledge. This is tested in the workplace by visiting assessors.

17. Staff are well qualified and experienced in their specialist areas. Two staff are responsible for visiting trainees in the workplace to assess the work and act as mentors for them. None of the companies employing the trainees has staff qualified as work-based assessors. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses from those given in the self-assessment report, which did not include weaknesses about the low levels of retention and achievement. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of diverse evidence in most portfolios
- ◆ frequent, effective workplace visits
- ◆ good and supportive employers
- ◆ wide range of good workshop facilities and resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ missed opportunities for accrediting key skills
- ◆ over-reliance on witness statements for NVQs at level 3

18. Trainees use a good range of evidence in their portfolios. Trainees are enthusiastic about the tasks they are required to undertake to gain an engineering qualification while being employed. In some companies, trainees undertake a diverse range of engineering tasks which exceed the requirements of their NVQs. Trainees compile their portfolios using evidence gathered during on- and off-the-

job training. Where possible, trainees make use of digital cameras to record evidence of their work in their workplaces and when undertaking tasks in customers' premises. During the weekly off-the-job training, a portfolio-building session is held. Trainees produce well-organised portfolios.

19. The college's assessors visit the trainees in the workplace every two or three weeks. Systems for internal verification are satisfactory. Flexibility is built into this schedule of visits to accommodate the shift patterns of trainees. During the visits, assessors review the progress of trainees and draw up an action plan. Employers value the frequency of these visits and, although they do not usually participate in the review sessions, they receive verbal feedback on the trainees' progress from the assessor and a copy of the action plan. The college's assessors ensure that workplace supervisors, wherever possible, allow trainees to experience the complete range of the workshop activities required for their NVQs. In one company, which is only able to offer a narrow range of engineering skills, the college has made arrangements for the trainee to join an alternative employer for a few weeks to cover all the other elements of the NVQ programme in a working environment.

20. Employers place great importance on the training and development of their apprentices. They frequently employ trainees recommended to them by the college, and use the college as an integral part of their recruitment processes. In some companies, the workplace induction includes quite detailed reference to the college and the training apprentices will undertake there. Local employers participate in the college's engineering advisory committee and have made positive suggestions for improvements to the programmes. Employers have helped to establish an effective system for reporting the absence of trainees from college. Some workplace supervisors ensure that when the trainees are not busy in the workplace, they work on realistic and relevant test pieces which they can use to demonstrate competence. Some trainees have received promotion before completing their qualifications in recognition of the high standards of skills and knowledge they have gained during their training.

21. The college's workshops for off-the-job training have good resources and provide an effective industrial environment. The workshop's stores operate in the same manner as those in a manufacturing company. There is a good range of specialist machinery in the practical workshops and this reflects the equipment used by local employers. The motor-vehicle workshops have a high level of industry standard equipment. To create a commercial environment, the college has established a vehicle service centre, which is staffed by trainees, to maintain the cars of staff and students. There is a high level of awareness among trainees of health and safety. One trainee, who was about to operate a machine without a guard, was alerted by his peer group to the potential dangers.

22. There is poor retention and achievement on some programmes. Successful completion of individual training plans within the identified training period is low. Between 1996 and 1999, 15 advanced modern apprentices began training. Five are

still in training, one has completed the programme and nine left their programmes early. This gives a retention rate of 47 per cent. Of the nine who left early, two achieved NVQs at level 2 and two achieved NVQs at level 3, but they did not complete the key skills requirements of their frameworks. Between 1998 and 2000, 19 foundation modern apprentices started training. None has completed the framework and 13, or 68 per cent, have remained in training. Of the 6 who have left, one achieved an NVQ at level 2 but did not complete the individual training plan. On other work-based training programmes between 1997 and 1999, the retention rate was 55 per cent, and the achievement rate was 34 per cent with 22 per cent still in training.

23. There are missed opportunities for trainees to achieve their key skills requirements. Most trainees do not fully understand the key skill requirements. There is little integration of key skills with occupational on- and off-the-job training. Most advanced modern apprentices are introduced to key skills towards the end of their programmes. One trainee, who successfully completed an NVQ at level 3 and is studying for a higher national certificate in engineering, was required to undertake unrelated key skills tasks at level 1 and complete a standard key skills workbook at this level. The trainee has not been encouraged to use the evidence already generated for the NVQ or higher national certificate. Some foundation modern apprentices produce good written evaluations of the practical work they undertake during off-the-job training. Trainees do not know if this evidence could be used and cross-referenced to their key skills portfolios.

24. There is an over-reliance on witness statements as evidence for NVQs at level 3. None of the employers have staff who are qualified as work-based assessors. Very few detailed observations are carried out in the workplace by the college's assessors. When the college's assessors visit trainees, they do not always take the opportunity to record the activity of trainees. One trainee was undertaking turning activities for a number of weeks and was visited frequently. Throughout this time, the college's assessor made no direct observation of the activity and the trainee's only evidence in the portfolio was witness statements.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

25. At the time of the original inspection, there were 16 foundation modern apprentices and one advanced modern apprentice. There are currently 18 foundation modern apprentices and five advanced modern apprentices. All learners are employed in local salons. They attend college for skills training workshops, background knowledge, including key skills, and tutorials. Most other practical training, part of the key skills training, and most assessments take place in the workplace. College staff monitor, review and assess learners in the workplace. They also carry out health and safety checks of employers' premises. Assessment visits are arranged to suit the needs of learners.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ insufficient use of diverse forms of evidence
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ insufficient clients for learners in the first year
- ◆ poor rates of retention and achievement of frameworks

26. All the weaknesses from the original inspection have been remedied. Assessments are now discussed, planned and recorded with the work-based assessor. Learners are aware of the targets they are working towards, what they have achieved, and what is expected of them in the assessment process. Learners use a range of evidence, including activities carried out in the workplace, for their assessments. Key skills training is an integral part of the vocational training programme, and evidence for both key skills and the NVQ is collected at the same time. The college has moved practical training into the workplace and learners are now assessed on a wider range of customers and models. Retention and achievement rates have improved since the original inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ thorough on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ effective use of links with salons and suppliers to train staff
- ◆ modern, well-equipped college salons

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor monitoring of on-the-job training
- ◆ inadequate progress reviews

27. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that rates of retention and achievement on the modern apprenticeship programme are good. The retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprenticeships in 1999-2000 were 89 per cent. In 2000-01, the retention rate was 77 per cent. So far, in 2001-02, the rate is 74 per cent. These are significant increases since the time of the original inspection, when retention and achievement rates were 31 per cent in 1998-99. On the advanced modern apprenticeship, all advanced modern apprentices in 1998-99 left before completing the framework. There were no advanced modern apprentices in 1999-2000. The retention and achievement rates for 2000-01 were 67 per cent. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices in 2001-02 is currently 100 per cent.

28. On- and off-the-job training is thorough. All learners and employers are provided with a scheme of work for the year. The schemes cover background knowledge sessions, demonstrations and skills workshops to take place at college,

GOOD PRACTICE

The college has produced a set of videos covering each of the NVQ units in hairdressing. They are used to give guidance to learners and to provide discussion points on why particular techniques should be used in the salon to meet clients' needs.

and practical training to be carried out in the workplace. Employers provide most of the learners' practical training in the workplace. This provides learners with a wide range of clients on which to practise and be assessed. Since the original inspection, the college has developed good links between on- and off-the-job training. The off-the-job training is well planned. All lecturers use clear schemes of work and detailed session plans. The ratio of trainers to learners for off-the-job training is good. Key skills training is an integral part of vocational training, and evidence is collected through NVQ assignments. The college staff work closely with work-based assessors to give guidance and support to help the assessors record key skills alongside their observations of NVQs. Learners have one-hour key skills training sessions each week at college. College staff visit learners in the workplace, including evenings and Saturdays, to carry out progress reviews, assessments and health and safety checks. There is no set schedule for assessment visits. Learners telephone to request a visit when they want to be assessed. Work-based assessors ensure that learners' workplace activities are used as evidence towards the NVQ and key skills. Witness testimonies and photographs of learners' work are used as evidence of the type and level of work carried out. Assessments are planned at college and a record is kept in each learner's portfolio. A comprehensive system monitors the progress of learners towards their NVQ and key skills. The system is regularly checked and updated by the work-based assessor.

29. The hairdressing tutors at the college have strong links with a local group of salons, which provides them with good professional development. Staff attend the group's training school in Stafford for intensive courses in cutting and colouring. This keeps staff up-to-date with the standards required by industry and ensures that they all work to the same standards. Good links with a national product supplier also provide regular opportunities for the staff to practise and improve their skills.

30. Salons in the workplace and at the college have a good standard of fixtures, fittings and resources. These enable training and assessment to be carried out effectively. The work-based learning is supported by the practical off-the-job training provided by the college's well-equipped salons. The college salons are designed for learners at different stages of training. Learners spend the first stage of their training programme in the intermediate salon and then move to the graduate salon. The graduate salon is run as a commercial profit-making enterprise in partnership with the group of local salons. The college salon provides the same standards of service and customer care as those of the group. The graduate salon has its own entrance at the front of the college. The group's director provides guidance, help and expertise to the college's hairdressing department. Learners use an extensive range of quality hairdressing products at the college and their place of work. The graduate salon has a computerised customer booking and recording system. This is operated by the college's staff, who are employed as salon receptionists. A computer in the salon provides learners with training in computerised customer record systems.

31. There is poor monitoring of on-the job training. Although the standard of

learners' practical work and background knowledge indicates that training in the workplace is effective, there is no evidence to indicate that the college has a formal system to assess the quality of training provided by employers.

32. The self-assessment report did not identify that progress reviews do not always take account of learners' training and achievements. Most progress reviews take place with the learner first, and then with either the employer or work-based assessor/trainer. In some instances, the review process does not involve the employer. Some of the information on the review form is added after the progress review form has been signed. This prevents learners and employers fully discussing the learner's progress. There are no unit or element target dates recorded on the review forms, even though they are recorded on the individual learning plans and the assessment plans. Feedback from the learner, employer and reviewer does not effectively reflect the work and activities carried out by the learner either at college or in the workplace. Most progress reviews do not identify learning support or learning needs that may have become apparent during the training programme. The progress reviews do not contribute to or update the learners' individual learning plans.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

33. The college has an equal opportunities policy statement, a harassment policy and procedures for complaints. Copies of the policies and the college's disability statement are distributed to learners at their induction. The promotion of equality of opportunity is part of the induction for staff and learners. The college collects data on the gender and ethnicity of learners. Equal opportunities monitoring is carried out at workplace visits and is also checked using learners' questionnaires. The college has a review group which oversees the equal opportunities procedures and develops the equal opportunities action plan.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some staff do not attend regular equal opportunities training
- ◆ overly complex equal opportunities reference materials
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient action plans to address gender imbalances in work-based training

34. The college has rectified most of the weaknesses that were identified at the original inspection. All work-based learning staff attend equal opportunities training. The equal opportunities documents have been rewritten in a clearer style. The college currently monitors equal opportunities in the workplace more thoroughly than it did at the time of the original inspection. Before an employer starts to provide training, a check is made to ensure they understand the commitment to equal opportunities that the college requires of them. Assessors

make regular checks with learners and employers to ensure that learners are protected from discrimination in the workplace. The college has attempted to recruit more women by reviewing and extending the range of its recruitment methods. However, there are still significantly more men on work-based learning than women. The self-assessment report did not give a separate grade for equal opportunities, but supporting paperwork indicates that the college awarded the same grade as that given by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ good coverage of equal opportunities at induction

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient recruitment of under-represented groups
- ◆ no analysis of achievement rates on the basis of equal opportunities data

35. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the college effectively promotes equality of opportunity to its learners, staff and to employers. The college's mission statement has a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy statement and the harassment policy are thorough and are clearly written. The equal opportunities policy statement is reviewed and updated regularly. It indicates effectively the college's commitment to equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity. It includes clear references to legislation, publicity materials, curriculum, recruitment, and codes of practice and monitoring. There are regular programmes of equal opportunity training for staff and employers. A manager in the college is responsible for equal opportunities. The equal opportunities review group meets regularly and monitors and promotes equality of opportunity effectively. College senior managers, including the principal, are members of this committee. The committee produces a detailed action plan to ensure equality of opportunity. Equal opportunities is part of staff induction. Recruitment materials contain pictures of people from under-represented groups in education and training, and are produced in the languages of minority ethnic groups where appropriate. Throughout the college's buildings, posters promote equal opportunities.

36. Equality of opportunity is covered well at learners' induction. They all receive a presentation which includes information on the college's approach to equal opportunities, anti harassment, legislation, disability and discrimination. Learners receive all relevant policies and statements, and copies of specially purchased CD-ROMs. Further information is available for learners through the college intranet. Learners' questionnaires indicate that most modern apprentices recall receiving equal opportunities awareness sessions at their induction. Measures for dealing with complaints, harassment, bullying and discrimination, including an appeals procedure, are clear. To date, no learner has used the college's formal procedures in this area. Any issues that learners have raised have been resolved before there

was a need to employ these procedures.

37. The college has introduced a number of initiatives to encourage applications from members of under-represented groups. These include advertising in newspapers and on radio stations aimed at minority ethnic groups, maintaining and developing links with local employers and community groups, visiting schools, and working with the careers service. A recent development is the use of successful women learners as role models. However, as yet, these initiatives have been ineffective. Only 1.5 per cent of learners on training programmes are from minority ethnic groups, and just under 80 per cent of learners are men.

38. The college collects data on the number of men, women and people from minority ethnic groups on modern apprenticeship programmes. It uses these data as a basis for the recruitment policy. The college also collects data on the rates of achievement and retention on the basis of gender and ethnic backgrounds. However, there is no analysis of retention and achievement rates using these bases.

Trainee support

Grade 3

39. Many trainees are already employed before starting on a programme at the college. The trainees are also referred from the careers service or approach the college themselves. The applicant is interviewed by a tutor who represents the occupational area in which the prospective trainee is interested. When the trainees enrol at the college, they are issued with a trainees' charter, handbook, and a swipe card which enables them to access the full range of the college's resources. They have an induction on their first day of training at the college. This includes a thirty-minute session given by the student services staff, which covers the availability of services and resources to the trainees at the college. Specialist staff within the support services offer a range of support, including counselling and advice with financial difficulties. Trainees' rights, the charter, careers prospects and equal opportunities are discussed at the induction. The trainees then continue their induction with the specialists within the department of their chosen occupational area. Each occupational area develops its own specific induction literature relevant to that programme. Trainees are initially assessed during the induction. The college uses its own numeric test along with the basic skills agency's test in communication. Trainees are required to be reviewed within the workplace every three months. Some of the strengths in the self-assessment report were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The college accurately identified the support available to trainees while at college as a strength and the weakness relating to little support for trainees in the workplace. The college did not identify weaknesses regarding the individual training plans and review process. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links with the local schools and careers service
- ◆ good college induction
- ◆ good range of support services available at the college
- ◆ regular celebration of trainees' success

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ results of initial assessment
- ◆ ineffective use of individual training plans
- ◆ poor review practices for trainees in the workplace

40. The college has effective links with the careers service and with local schools. Staff from the careers service attend the college to give presentations to trainees on different career routes. There are currently projects involving the college, local schools and the careers service which track trainees' progress from school and through their chosen work-based training option. Some trainees are identified as being at risk of expulsion or having difficulties fitting in with the education system when they are at school. The projects allow all parties involved with the trainees to follow their progress closely and respond quickly should there be any cause for concern. Schools use programmes run at the college to enable potential trainees to take taster courses and gain an insight into their chosen careers. The college attends all local careers events and promotes TEC-funded programmes to potential trainees. All marketing materials make reference to apprenticeships.

41. The college induction has been regularly reviewed to ensure that the right amount of information is given out according to the nature of the programmes which trainees are attending. When trainees enrol, they are issued with a range of reference materials and these materials are reinforced during the induction. This is given on the trainees' first day. The trainees attend a 30-minute computer-generated presentation in the lecture theatre by the student services staff to learn about the support services available. Trainees who start a programme outside the start dates of the usual academic year receive the same induction and reference materials. After six weeks, a check is carried out with the trainees to ensure everything has been covered. The individual departments develop their own materials which are specific to the occupational area. There is no systematic workplace induction and the level of detail is dependent on the trainees' employers.

42. There is a wide range of readily available and accessible support services for trainees. Specialist staff are available in areas such as counselling and careers guidance. Staff are well qualified and experienced in their specialist areas. There is a specialist key skills training centre which tutors and trainees use. There is a suite containing 150 computers with Internet access, which are available to and used by trainees.

43. There is good celebration of trainees' successes across all occupational areas.

Trainees who may have achieved little throughout their school education are proud to achieve awards for effort and achievement. Trainees in most of the occupational areas are encouraged to enter various regional and national competitions run by external bodies. One woman training in painting and decorating has achieved a second and third place over the past two years as young paper hanger of the year. There are prizes awarded and sponsored by local industry and a female engineer achieved an apprentice of the year award. Much local publicity is gained through trainees' achievements.

44. All trainees undergo initial assessment in numeracy and communication as part of their induction. Mathematics specialists at the college have developed the colleges' numeracy test. Trainees are not always informed of the results of their test and are not sure why they have to take it. Trainees do not know how the results of these tests influence their training programmes. Results of the initial assessment are entered on the individual training plan, but little reference is made to them. The individual training plan is kept at the college and trainees and tutors do not have a copy. Some tutors use additional materials to test trainees to establish their starting levels of ability as they are not aware of the results of the initial test they have already done.

45. The trainees' individual training plans are not used effectively. Administrators working in the central office complete large parts of the trainees' individual training plans without the trainees' input. The plan is then sent to the tutors to complete the qualification details and the form is sent to the employer to sign. Eventually it is sent out to the parents of the trainee for their signatures, as required by the TEC. Little emphasis is placed on the individual training plan, ignoring its critical importance in planning out the next two to three years of the trainee's career. Those involved in preparing and signing the plan place little value on its importance. Neither the trainees nor the employers have copies to refer to or to judge the trainees' progress against. Administration staff, who have little knowledge of each trainee and no knowledge of the occupational area, update the individual training plans. Changes to the frameworks which trainees are working towards have not been amended on the individual training plans. Some of the target dates for completion of the qualifications are inaccurate and inappropriate.

46. The contract with the TEC requires that trainees' progress reviews are held every three months. Many trainees have not had regular reviews. A new review form has been introduced, but it contains little useful information by which progress can be measured. Statements on trainees' progress reviews are general and unspecific, not qualified or quantified by the use of any data. There are no specific comments on progress or targets set. The trainees are not given a copy of the review form to refer to, although occasionally an employer will receive a copy through the post. Employers are not encouraged to contribute to the reviews in a meaningful way. Where trainees are graded on their personal skills, they are sometimes given lower grades than they were previously awarded. Since the reviews do not refer to the records of the previous reviews, it is not possible for the reviewer to comment sensibly on trainees' progress. The reviews are often not

completed properly and questions asked are answered incorrectly through lack of guidance. Where trainees do comment, there is no indication what action has been taken to address any of their issues or concerns.

Management of training

Grade 3

47. The college has a mission statement, and a strategic plan which is developed every three years and reviewed on an annual basis. Targets are set within the plan, after consultation with occupational training teams, for recruitment, retention and achievement of work-based trainees. After the plan is agreed by the board of governors, an operating statement is drawn up, naming key staff responsible and giving timescales for achieving the targets set. The targets are reviewed weekly by the senior management team and at monthly meetings of staff directly involved in the training aspect of the TEC contract. TEC-funded training is the responsibility of the head of faculty for services to people, with day-to-day management delegated to the college's finance manager. TEC-funded trainees are fully integrated into college programmes, and occupational teams take full responsibility for training and assessment. Each occupational area has an advisory board of local employers to provide links with industry and the community. The college has a detailed annual appraisal system linked to staff development. The college as a whole has 252 permanent teaching staff, of whom 27 are directly involved with TEC-funded training. All staff have up-to-date job descriptions. Inspectors agreed with the strength concerning good staff development and identified further strengths. The inspectors did not agree with the strength about excellent administration, or that the weakness about key skills integration should be included in this generic area. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses relating to the management of work-based training processes. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

POOR PRACTICE

One trainee in hairdressing has been attending the college for a year without the appropriate forms being correctly completed. The trainee believes she is a national trainee, but she is not signed up to any specific programme.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough staff recruitment procedures
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ good range of internal communications
- ◆ excellent partnerships with industry

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate management of some work-based training processes
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient analysis and use of data as evidence for management decisions

48. There is a systematic and well-written approach to recruitment of staff designed to encourage equality of opportunity. All posts are advertised externally, after job descriptions and person specifications have been drawn up by line

managers in consultation with the personnel department. Applications are given a number to avoid any subjectivity. The tight short-listing and interview process involves the use of rating forms to aid fair selection. Staff conducting interviews have all received training in fair selection. The selection panel always includes a personnel officer, a senior manager and the line manager of the proposed appointee. Questions are carefully chosen, and are the same for each interviewee, and questions relating to equal opportunities are used as part of the selection criteria. Candidates are informed of the outcome of the interview within two days. Emergency cover for staff is provided from a pool of part-time staff who have all been appointed through the proper channels. Assessors must have occupational accreditation from awarding bodies.

49. The college encourages the continuous development of staff. The process starts with a comprehensive induction, which includes an introduction to policies and procedures on equal opportunities, harassment, quality assurance, health and safety, appraisal and staff development. During a six-month probationary period, new staff are supported by a mentor and receive three reviews by their line managers. All staff are subject to annual appraisals and six-monthly reviews, during which their development needs are identified. Results of appraisals are analysed to form the basis of a programme of five development days for staff a year, when training is offered to all staff according to business priorities, curriculum changes, or individual needs highlighted through appraisals or teaching observations. Staff can also apply for any other training they need to improve their job skills. Work secondments to industry are encouraged.

50. Good channels exist to keep staff informed of day-to-day matters and provide opportunities for two-way communication. The staff involved in TEC-funded training meet at least once a month to update one another on developments, to review targets, and to discuss arising issues. The principal holds monthly team briefings for key managers, and there are regular cross-college meetings for middle managers. A glossy monthly newsletter for staff contains articles on what staff are doing, training opportunities, new qualifications, changes in policies and procedures, social events and the trainees' successes. An abbreviated version of the strategic plan is circulated to staff with their monthly payslips. The college intranet provides instant information on such topics as staff development, news from awarding bodies, events and funding mechanisms.

51. The college has an excellent partnership with a major commercial hairdressing chain, which has resulted in a prominent manufacturer sponsoring the training salon within the college. The sponsors also provide staff development and work experience for trainees. This venture has improved the profile of hairdressing as a career and has benefited the trainees by exposing them to excellent facilities and work experience in a good commercial salon. In engineering and construction, productive two-way links between the college and local employers have resulted in mutual benefits. Employers have donated additional materials and equipment to the college and the college has provided some free training for employers. Some employers are involved with the occupational advisory boards, along with staff

from the college, which meet three or four times a year to review training.

52. There is poor management of some of the work-based training processes. No system exists to ensure that there are periodic reviews with trainees at the contracted frequency of every three months. There is often inadequate training for staff when new forms or procedures relating to work-based training are introduced. Forms are sometimes disseminated at meetings of the staff team, but staff not attending receive no instructions or guidance on the forms. There is no central tracking of trainees' progress through their programmes from start to leaving. There is no management system for recording the completion of NVQ units or other components of their individual training plans. Some training staff are unclear about the TEC's contract requirements, despite receiving copies of all paperwork, including the full contract.

53. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak. The extent of employers' involvement in training is variable. Some employers have little understanding of the NVQs, and they are unable to give training which they know will be relevant to their trainees. There are no training plans linking on- and off-the-job training, and training given by employers is not linked to the training given at college. Trainees often have to repeat training activities at college which they regularly carry out at work. Some employers have no knowledge of the skills trainees are learning at college and therefore miss opportunities to make use of trainees' new skills in the workplace.

54. Data produced by the management information system are used primarily to monitor the college's performance against the contractual requirements of the TEC. Current performance indicators do not identify the impact of the late introduction of key skills on the completion of trainees' frameworks. The retention and achievement data have not been analysed in a systematic way to identify any weaknesses. Some of the occupational teams are unaware of the poor retention rates on some programmes. Management decisions are not routinely guided by a detailed analysis of data and the monitoring of trends.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

55. Since the original inspection, the college has revised its quality assurance system. Responsibility for quality assurance is shared among the head of curriculum and quality work-based pathways, the work-based learning contracts manager, the managers of areas of learning and the manager for quality assurance. The college has a set of procedures and arrangements to ensure the quality of its training provision. The quality assurance policy sets out the college's commitment to quality assurance, provides an overview of its quality assurance arrangements, and explains how the college will maintain and improve the standard of training provision for its learners. The college holds the ISO 9001 quality standard, an international quality assurance standard, and was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 1999, a national standard for improving an organisation's

performance through its people.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate policies, procedures and materials for work-based training
- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice
- ◆ lack of focus on work-based training in self-assessment process

56. The college has resolved most of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. The college has a clear set of quality assurance procedures that relate to the different aspects of work-based learning. There are now forums for staff to share good practice, including cross-college meetings of work-based learning staff who discuss and share good practice. After the original inspection, the college changed from separate work-based learning and college self-assessment reports to producing one single report. The self-assessment report did not give a separate grade for quality assurance, but supporting paperwork indicated that the college awarded a grade lower than that given by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and effective quality assurance system
- ◆ good arrangements for target-setting

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient focus on work-based learning in the self-assessment process
- ◆ no observation of training in the workplace

57. The college has a comprehensive and effective framework for ensuring the quality of work-based learning. There is a clearly written quality assurance policy. There are procedures for each part of the training process and schemes of work that set the standard for work-based learning. Performance is reviewed through course reviews and the self-assessment process. A key feature of the quality assurance system is the regular meeting of the work-based learning team, which reviews and monitors the standards of training provision on a weekly basis and takes action if standards are not met. Since the original inspection, a quality assurance development committee and a quality assurance systems audit have been introduced. For off-the-job training there is an observation system that monitors the quality of tuition. Arrangements for verifying work-based learning are clear and supported by appropriate paperwork, including a verification policy and verification procedures documents. Reports from external verifiers are positive. There are effective methods to collect the views of work-based learners and employers. Questionnaires are used to gather the views of learners during induction and training, and to collect the views of employers. Assessors collect feedback from learners when visiting employers' premises. Findings from questionnaires are evaluated and action points are raised to resolve issues.

58. A strength not recorded in the self-assessment report is that the college has

well-established and thorough methods for target-setting. Targets are set for learners in their individual learning plans. The college sets targets for recruitment and retention and achievement rates. Targets are set for each area of learning and these contribute to the college's overall targets for rates of achievement and retention. Targets are based on past performance, but also take into account the need to continually improve learners' performance. The achievement of targets is reviewed weekly, using reports on learners' progress and achievements. In most areas of learning, targets are being met. When they are not met, the college takes steps to improve them.

59. Although the new self-assessment report refers to, and provides, grades for training in the workplace, the course reviews do not contain enough judgements on the quality of work-based training. From the self-assessment report and the course reviews, it is difficult to evaluate the standard of training in the workplace. The self-assessment process does not effectively evaluate the quality of leadership and management in work-based learning. Inspectors agreed with a number of the judgements relating to work-based learning in the self-assessment report, and found some additional strengths and weaknesses. In general, the report's key strengths and weaknesses were supported by the evidence provided.

60. Although the college has a number of methods to monitor the standard of training provision in the workplace, it does not observe trainers and learners on employers' premises. There is a programme of observation for off-the-job training and teaching at the college but this system has not been extended to on-the-job training in the workplace.